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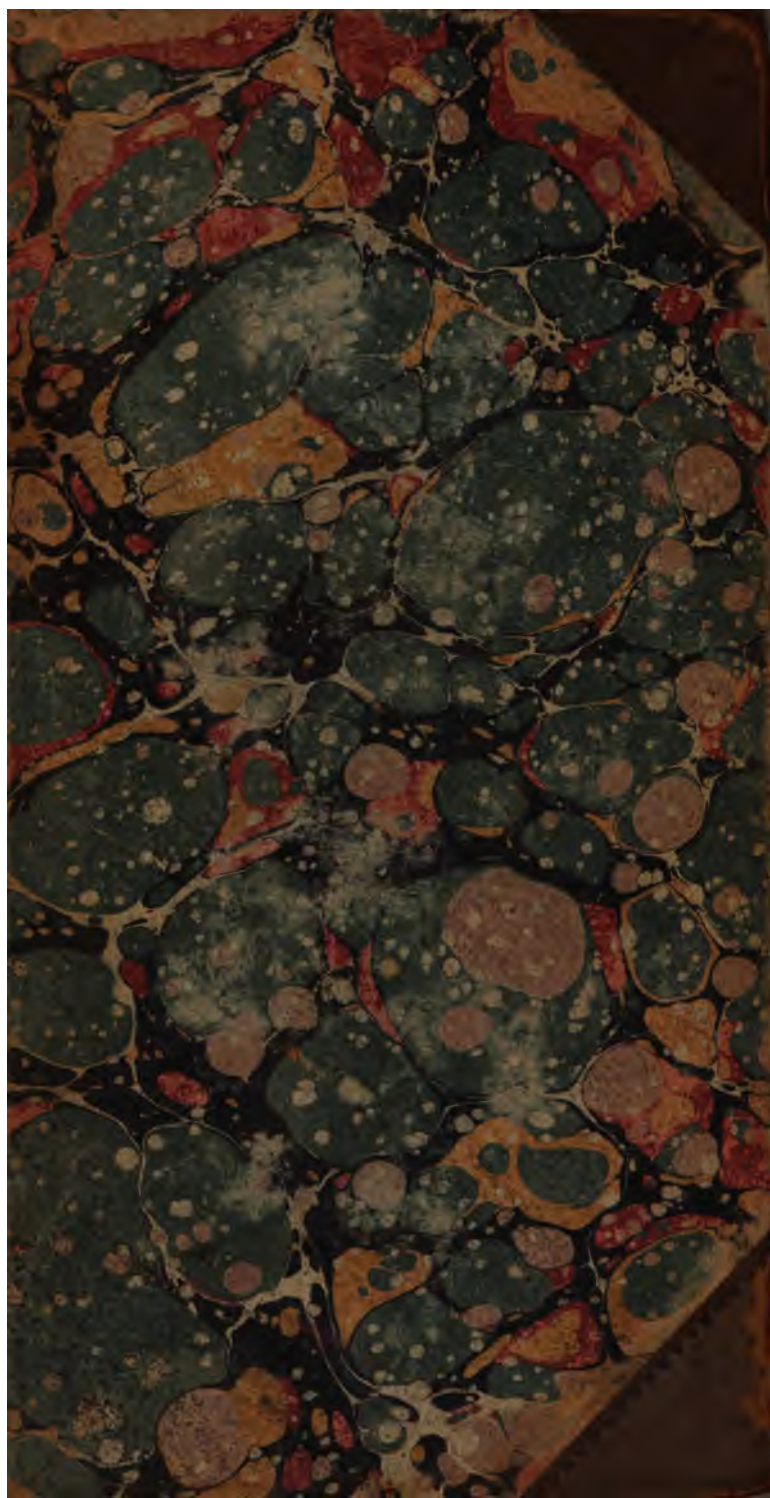
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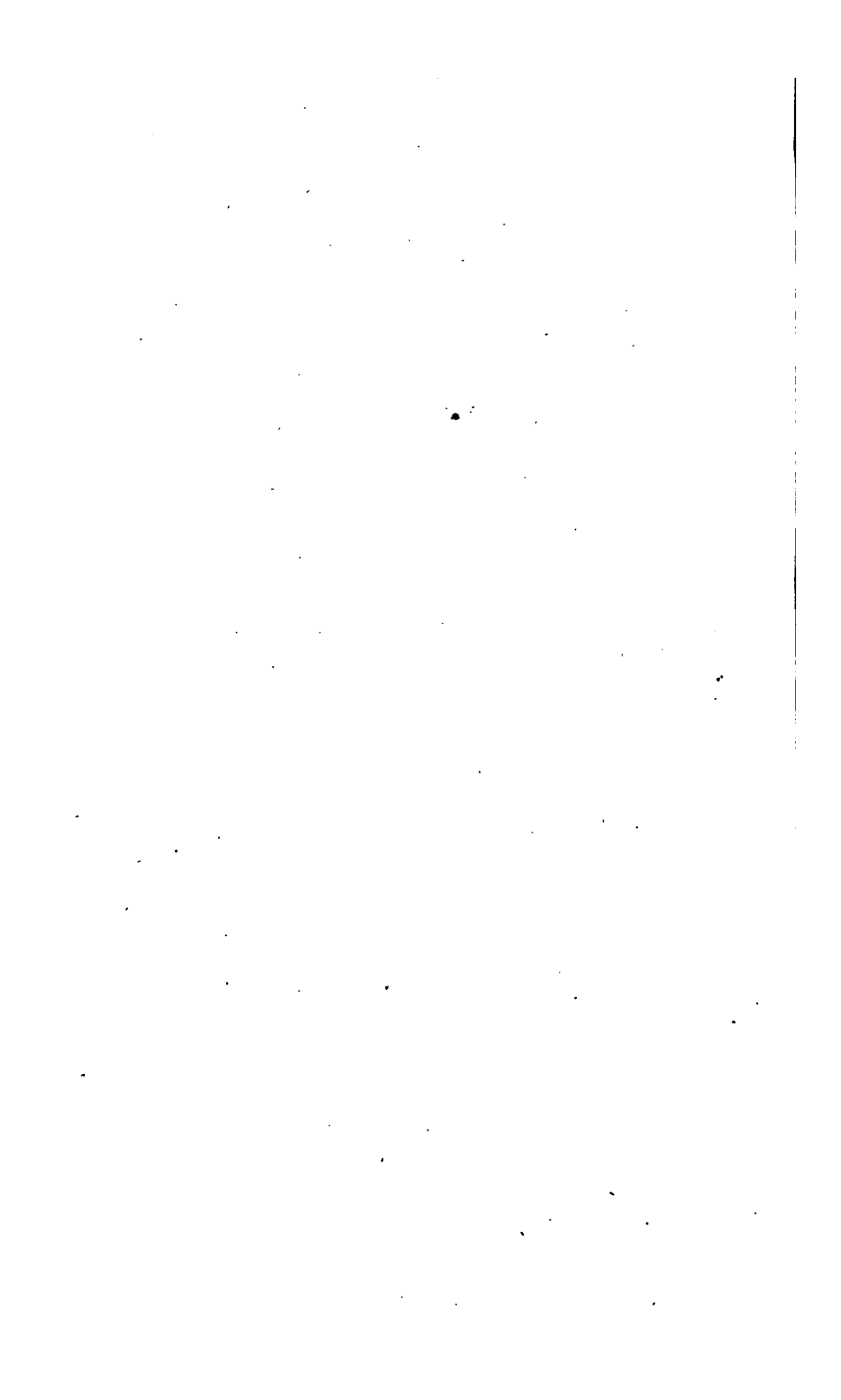
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LONDON :
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TO
HUGH SCOTT, ESQUIRE,
OF HARDEN,
THIS WORK,
AN INADEQUATE TESTIMONY
OF
SINCERE RESPECT, REGARD, AND ESTEEM,
IS DEDICATED,
BY
HIS FAITHFUL AND OBLIGED SERVANT,
THE AUTHOR.



£

MARY OF BURGUNDY;

OR,

THE REVOLT OF GHENT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"DARNLEY," "RICHELIEU," "HENRY MASTERTON,"

&c.

"Thou wouldst be great,
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it. What thou wouldst highly
That thou wouldst holily; wouldst not play false,
And yet wouldst wrongly win." *Macbeth.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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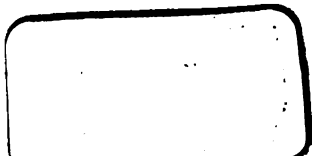
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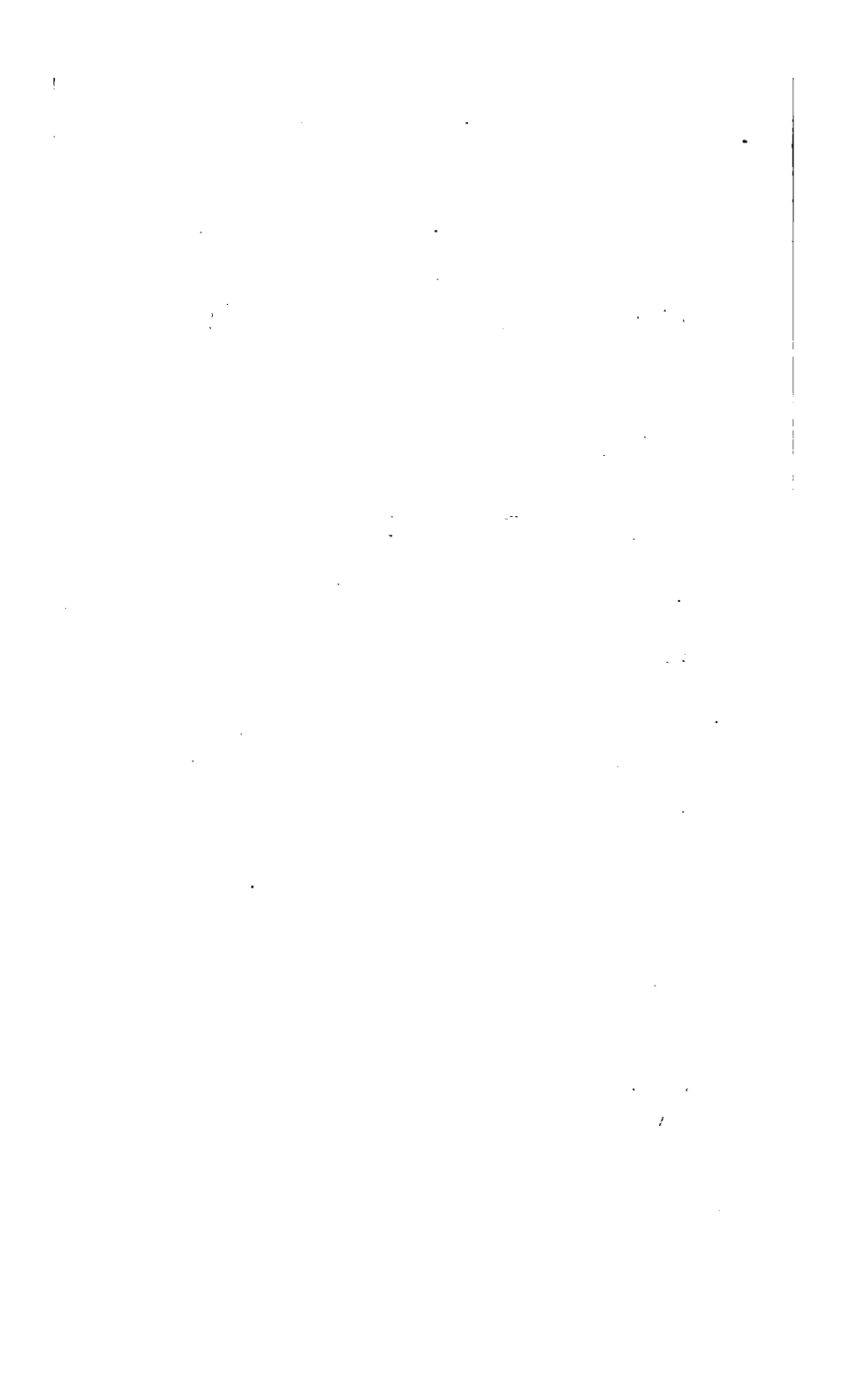
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MARY OF BURGUNDY;

OR,

THE REVOLT OF GHENT.

CHAPTER I.

It was on the evening of a beautiful day in the beginning of September, 1456, — one of those fair autumn days that wean us, as it were, from the passing summer, with the light as bright, and the sky as full of rays, as in the richest hours of June; and with nothing but a scarce perceptible shade of yellow in the woods to tell that it is not the proudest time of the year's prime. It was in the evening, I have said; but nothing yet betokened darkness. The sun had glided a considerable way on his descent down the bright arch of the western sky, yet without one ray being sha-

dowed, without one beam being lost. He had reached that degree of declination alone, at which his light, pouring from a spot a little above the horizon, produced, as it streamed over forest and hill, grand masses of light and shade, with every here and there a point of dazzling brightness, where the clear evening rays were reflected from stream or lake.

It was in the heart of a deep forest, too, whose immemorial trees, worn away by time, or felled by the axe, left in various places wide open spaces of broken ground and turf, brushwood and dingle — and amidst whose deep recesses a thousand spots of picturesque beauty lay hidden from the eye of man. Those were not, indeed, times when taste and cultivation had taught the human race to appreciate fully all the charms and magnificence wherewith Nature's hand has robed the globe which we inhabit; and the only beings that then trod the deeper glades of the forest were the woodman, the hunter, or those less fortunate persons who, as we see them represented by the wild pencil of Salvator Rosa, might greatly

increase the picturesque beauty of the scenes they frequented; but, probably, did not particularly feel it themselves. But there is, nevertheless, in the heart of man, a native sense of beauty, a latent sympathy, a harmony with all that is lovely on the earth, which makes him unconsciously seek out spots of peculiar sweetness, not only for his daily dwelling, but also for both his temporary resting place, and for the mansion of his long repose, whether the age or the country be rude or not.

Look at the common cemetery of a village, and you will generally find that it is pitched in the most picturesque spot to be found in the neighbourhood: if left to his free will, the peasant will almost always — without well knowing why — build his cottage where he may have something fair or bright before his eyes; and the very herd, while watching his cattle or his sheep, climbs up the face of the crag, to sit and gaze over the fair expanse of Nature's face.

It was in the heart of a deep forest, then, at the distance of nearly twenty miles from Louvain, that a boy, of about ten years of age,

was seen sleeping by the side of a small stream; which, dashing over a high rock hard by, gathered its bright waters in a deep basin at the foot, and then rushed, clear and rapidly, through the green turf beyond. The old trees of the wood were scattered abroad from the stream, as if to let the little waterfall sparkle at its will in the sunshine. One young ash tree, alone, self-sown by the side of the river, waved over the boy's head, and cast a dancing veil of checkered light and shade upon features as fair as eye ever looked upon.

At about a hundred yards from the spot where he was lying, a sandy road wound through the savannah, and plunged into the deeper parts of the wood. On the other side, however, the ground being of a more open nature, it might be seen winding up the steep ascent of a high hill, with the banks, which occasionally flanked it to the east, surmounted by long lines of tall overhanging trees.

A little bridge of stone, whose ruinous condition spoke plainly how rarely the traveller's foot trod the path through the forest, spanned

over the stream at a little distance. And the evening light, as it poured in from the west, caught bright upon the countenance of the sleeping boy, upon the dancing cascade above his head, upon many a flashing turn in the stream, and, after gilding the ivy that mantled the old bridge, passed on to lose itself gradually in the gloom of the deep masses of forest-ground beyond.

The dress of the sleeper accorded well with the scene in which he was found; it consisted of a full coat, of forest-green, gathered round his waist by a broad belt, together with the long tight hose common at the period. In his belt, was a dagger and knife; but on his head he had no covering, except the glossy curls of his dark brown hair. And though the material of his garments was of the finest cloth which the looms of Ypres could produce, yet marks of toil, and even of strife, were apparent in the dusty and torn state of his habiliments.

He lay, however, in that calm, deep, placid sleep, only known to youth, toil, and innocence. His breath was so light, and his slumber was

so calm, that he might have seemed dead, but for the rosy hue of health that overspread his cheeks. No sound had any effect upon his ear, though, while he lay beside the stream, a wild, timid stag came rustling through the brushwood to drink of its waters, and suddenly seeing a human thing amidst the solitude of the forest, bounded quick away among the long glades of the wood. After that, the leaves waved over him, and the wind played with the curls of his hair for nearly half an hour, without any living creature approaching to disturb his repose. At the end of that time, some moving objects made their appearance at the most distant point of the road, where it sunk over the hill. At first, all that could be seen was a body moving forward down the descent, enveloped in a cloud of dust ; but, gradually, it separated into distinct parts, and assumed the form of a party of armed horsemen. Their number might be ten or twelve ; and, by the slowness of their motions, it seemed that they had already travelled far. More than once, as they descended, they paused, and appeared to

gaze over the country, as if either contemplating its beauty, or doubtful of the road they ought to take. These pauses, however, always ended in their resuming their way towards the spot which we have described. When they at length reached it, they again drew the rein; and it became evident, that uncertainty, with regard to their farther progress, had been the cause of their several halts upon the hill.

“By my faith, Sir Thibalt of Neufchatel,” said one of the horsemen who rode a little in advance of the others, “for Marshal of Burgundy, you know but little of your lord’s dominions. By the holy Virgin, methinks that you are much better acquainted with every high road and by-path of my poor appanage of Dauphiny. At least so the worthy burghers of Vienne were wont to assert, when we would fain have squeezed the double crowns out of their purses. It was then their invariable reply, that the Marshal of Burgundy had been upon them with his lances, and drained them as dry as hay — coming no one knew how, and going no one knew where.”

The man who spoke was yet not only in his prime, but in the early part of that period of life which is called middle age. There was no peculiar beauty in his countenance, nor in his person; there was nothing either to strike or to please. Yet it was impossible to stand before him, and not to feel one's self, without very well knowing why, in the presence of an extraordinary man. There was in his deportment to be traced the evident habit of command. He spoke, as if knowing that his words were to be obeyed. But that was not all; from underneath the overhanging penthouse of his thick eyebrows shone forth two keen grey eyes, which had in them a prying, inquisitive cunning, which seemed anxiously exerted to discover at once the thoughts of those they gazed upon, before a veil could be drawn over motives or feelings, to conceal them from that searching glance.

Those given to physiognomy might have gathered, from his high and projecting, but narrow forehead, the indications of a keen and observing mind with but little imagination, su-

perstition without fancy, and talent without wit. The thin, compressed lips, the naturally firm-set posture of the teeth, the curling line from the nostril to the corner of the mouth, might have been construed to imply a heart naturally cruel, which derived not less pleasure from the wounds inflicted by bitter words than from producing mere corporeal pain. His dress, at this time of his life, was splendid to excess; and the horse on which he rode showed the high blood that poured through his veins, by a degree of fire and energy far superior to that exhibited by the chargers of his companions, though the journey he had performed was the same which had so wearied them.

As he spoke the words before detailed, he looked back to a gentleman, who rode a step or two behind him on his right hand, and on his countenance appeared, what he intended to be, a smile of frank, good-humoured raillery. The natural expression of his features mingled with it nevertheless, and gave it an air of sarcasm, which made the bitter, perhaps, preponderate over the sweet.

The person to whom he addressed himself, however, listened with respectful good humour. "In truth, my lord," he replied, "so little have I dwelt in this part of the duke's dominions, that I know my way less than many a footboy. I once was acquainted with every rood of ground between Brussels and Tirlemont; but, God be thanked, my memory is short, and I have forgotten it all, as readily as I hope you, sir, may forget certain marches in Dauphiny, made when Louis the Dauphin was an enemy to Burgundy, instead of an honoured guest."

"They are forgot, Lord Marshal, they are forgot," replied the Dauphin, afterwards famous as Louis XI., "and can never more be remembered but to show me how much more pleasant it is to have the lord of Neufchatel for a friend rather than an enemy. But, in heaven's name," he added, changing the subject quickly, "before we go farther, let us seek some one to show us the way, or let us halt our horses here, and wait for the fat citizens of Ghent that we left on the other side of the river."

His companion shook his head with a doubtful smile, as he replied, "It will be difficult, I trow, to find any guide here, without Saint Hubert, or some other of the good saints, were to send us a white stag with a collar of gold round his neck, to lead us safely home, as the old legends tell us they used to do of yore."

"The saints have heard your prayer, my lord," cried one of the party who had strayed a little to the left, but not so far as to be out of hearing the conversation which was passing between the other two; "the saints have heard your prayer, and here is the white stag, in the form of a fair boy in a green jerkin." As he spoke, he pointed forward with his hand towards the little cascade, where the boy, who had been sleeping by its side, had now started up, awakened by the sound of voices, and of horses' feet, and was gazing on the travellers, with anxious eyes, and his hand resting on his dagger.

"Why, how now, boy!" cried the Dauphin, spurring up towards the stream. "Thinkest thou that we are Jews, or cut-throats, or wild

men of the woods, that thou clutchest thy knife so fearfully? Say, canst thou tell how far we are from Tirlemont?"

The boy eyed the party for several moments ere he replied. "How should I know whether you are cut-throats or not?" he said, at length: "I have seen cut-throats in as fine clothes. How far is it from Tirlemont? As far as it is from Liege or Namur."

"Then, by my troth, Sir Marshal," said the Dauphin, turning to his companion, "our horses will never carry us thither this night. What is to be done?"

"What is the nearest town or village, boy?" demanded the Marshal of Burgundy. "If we be at equal distances from Namur and Liege and Tirlemont, we cannot be far from Hannut."

"Hannut is the nearest place," answered the boy; "but it is two hours' ride for a tired horse."

"We will try it, however," said the Marshal; and then added, turning to the Dauphin, "The Lord of the castle of Hannut, sir,

though first cousin of the bad Duke of Gueldres, is a noble gentleman as ever lived; and I can promise you a fair reception. Though once a famous soldier, he has long cast by the lance and casque; and, buried deep in studies, which churchmen say are hardly over holy, he passes his whole time in solitude, except when some ancient friend breaks in upon his reveries. Such a liberty I may well take. — Now, boy, tell us our road, and there is a silver piece for thy pains.”

The boy stooped not to raise the money which the Marshal threw him, but replied eagerly, “ If any one will take me on the croup behind him, I will show you easily the way: — nay, I beseech ye, noble lords, take me with you; for I am wearied and alone, and I must lie in the forest all night if ye refuse me.”

“ But dost thou know the way well, my fair boy?” demanded the Dauphin, approaching nearer, and stooping over his saddle-bow to speak to the boy with an air of increasing kindness. “ Thou art so young, methinks thou

scarce canst know all the turnings of a wood like this. Come, let us hear if thy knowledge is equal to the task of guiding us?"

"That it is," answered the boy at once. "The road is as easy to find as a heron's nest in a bare tree. One has nothing to do but to follow on that road over the bridge: take the two first turnings to the right, and then the next to the left, and at the end of a league more the castle is before you."

"Ay," said the Dauphin, "is it so easy as that? Then, by my faith, I think we can find it ourselves. — Come, Sir Marshal, come!" and, so saying, he struck his spurs into his horse's sides, and cantered over the bridge.

The Marshal of Burgundy looked back with a lingering glance of compassion at the poor boy thus unfeelingly treated by his companion. But, as the Prince dashed forward and waved his hand for him to follow, he rode on also, though not without a muttered comment on the conduct of the other, which might not have given great pleasure had it been vented aloud. The whole train followed; and, left alone,

the boy stood silent, gazing on them as they departed, with a flushed cheek and a curling lip. "Out upon the traitors!" he exclaimed, at length. "All men are knaves; yet it is but little honour to their knavery to cheat a boy like me."

The train wound onward into the wood, and the last horseman was soon hid from his eyes: but the merry sound of laughing voices, borne by the wind to his ear for some moments after they were out of sight, spoke painfully how little interest they took in his feelings or situation.

He listened till all was still; and then, seating himself on the bank of the stream, gazed vacantly on the bubbling waters as they rushed hurriedly by him; while the current of his own thoughts held as rapid and disturbed a course. As memory after memory of many a painful scene and sorrow, such as infancy has seldom known, came up before his sight, his eyes filled, the tears rolled rapidly over his cheeks, and, casting himself prostrate on the ground, he hid his face amongst the long grass, and sobbed as if his heart would have broken.

He had not lain there long, however, when a heavy hand, laid firmly on his shoulder, caused him once more to start up. And, though the figure which stood by him when he did so was not one whose aspect was very prepossessing, yet it would be difficult to describe the sudden lightning of joy that sparkled in his eyes through the tears with which they still overflowed. The person who had roused him from the prostrate despair in which he had cast himself down, was a middle-sized, broad-made man, with long sinewy arms, and a chest like that of a mountain bull. He might be nearly forty years of age; and his face, which had once been fair, — a fact which was vouched alone by his light brown hair, and clear blue eye, — had now reached a hue nearly approaching to the colour of mahogany, by constant exposure to the summer's sun and the winter's cold. There was in it, withal, an expression of daring hardihood, softened and, as it were, purified by a frank, free, good-humoured smile, which was not without a touch of droll humour. His garb at once bespoke him one of those

vagrant sons of Mars, with whom war in some shape was a never-failing trade;—a class of which we must speak more hereafter, and which the abuses of the feudal system, the constant feuds of chieftain with chieftain, and the long and desolating warfare between France and England had at that time rendered but too common in every part of Europe. He was not, indeed, clothed from head to heel in cold iron, as was customary with the knight or man-at-arms when ready for the field; but there was quite a sufficient portion of old steel about his person, in the form of arms both offensive and defensive, to show that hard blows were the principal merchandise in which he traded.

He laid his large hairy hand, as I have said, firmly and familiarly on the boy's shoulder; and the expression of the young wanderer's countenance, as he started up, and beheld who it was that stood near him, at once showed not only that they were old acquaintances, but that their meeting was both unexpected and joyful.

“Matthew Gournay!” exclaimed the boy,

“ good Matthew Gournay, is it you, indeed? Oh, why did you not come before? With your fifty good lances we might yet have held the castle out, till we were joined by the troops from Utrecht; but now all is lost — the castle taken, and my father —— ”

“ I know it all, Master Hugh,” interrupted the soldier — “ I know it all better than the pater-noster. Bad news flies faster than a swallow; so I know it all, and a good deal more than you yourself know. You ask, why I did not come too; by our Lady, for the simplest reason in the world — because I could not. I was lying like an old rat in a trap, with four stone walls all round about me, in the good city of Liege. Duke Philip heard of the haste I was making to give you help, and clogged with the old bishop — may his skull be broken! — to send out a couple of hundred *reiters* to intercept us on our march. — What would you have? We fought like devils, but we were taken at a disadvantage, by a superior force. All my gallant fellows were killed or dispersed; and at last, finding my back against a rock,

with six spears at my breast, and not loving the look of such a kind of toasting fork, I agreed to take lodging in the town prison of Liege."

"But how got you out, then?" demanded the boy; "did they free you for good-will?"

"Not they," replied Matthew Gournay: "they gave me cold water and hard bread, and vowed every day to stick my head upon the gate of the town, *as a terror to all marauders*, as they called me. But the fools showed themselves rank burghers, by leaving me my arms; and I soon found means to get the iron bars out of the windows, ventured a leap of thirty feet, swam the ditch, climbed the wall, and here I am in the forest of Hannut—but not alone, Master Hugh; I have got a part of my old comrades together already, and hope soon to have a better band than ever. The old senechal too, from the castle, is with us, and from him we heard all the bad news. But, though he talked of murder and putting to death, and flaying alive, and vowed that every body in the castle had been killed but himself, I got an

inkling from the old charcoal burner's wife, at the hut in the wood, of how you had escaped, and whither you had gone. So, thinking, as you were on foot and alone, that you might want help and a horse, I tracked you like a deer to this place : for your father was always a good friend to me in the time of need, and I will stand by you, Master Hugh, while I have a hand for my sword, or a sword for my hand."

"Hark!" cried the boy, almost as the other spoke; "there's a bugle on the hill; it must be the duke's butchers following me."

"A bugle!" cried the soldier; "a cow's horn blown by a sow-driver, you mean. None of the duke's bugles ever blew a blast like that, something between the groaning of a blacksmith's bellows and the grunting of a hog. But there they are," he continued, "sure enough, lances and all, as I live. We must to cover, Hugh, we must to cover! Quick—thy hand, boy—they are coming down straggling like fallow deer!"

So saying, Matthew Gournay sprang up the high bank, in falling over which the little

stream formed the cascade we have noticed; and, as he climbed the rock himself, he assisted, or rather dragged up after him, his young companion, whose hand he held locked in his own, with a grasp which no slight weight could have unbent. For a moment, they paused on the top of the crag, to take another look at the approaching party, and then plunged amongst the long shrubs and tangled brushwood that clothed the sides of the winding glen, down which the stream wandered previous to its fall.

CHAPTER II.

THE party, whose approach had interrupted the conversation of Matthew Gournay with his young companion, were not long before they reached the little open spot in the forest, from which they had scared the other two ; and, as it was at that point that their road first fell in with the stream, they paused for a moment, to water their horses ere they proceeded. Their appearance and demeanour corresponded well with the peculiar sound of the horn which they had blown upon the hill ; for though the instrument which announced their approach was martial in itself, yet the sounds which they produced from it were any thing but military ; and though swords and lances, casques and breast-plates, were to be seen in profusion amongst them, there was scarcely one of the party who had not a certain burgher rotundity of figure, or negligence of gait, far more in harmony

with furred gowns and caps *à la mortier* than with war steeds and glittering arms.

The first, who paused beside the stream, had nearly been thrown over his horse's head, by the animal suddenly bending his neck to drink; and it was long before the rider could sufficiently compose himself again in the saddle to proceed with some tale which he had been telling to one of his companions, who urged him to make an end of his story, with an eagerness which seemed to show that the matter was one of great interest to him at least.

“ Well-a-day, Master Nicholas, well-a-day!” cried the discomposed horseman, “ let me but settle myself on my stool — saddle, I mean : God forgive me ! but this cursed beast has pulled the bridle out of my hands. — So ho ! Bernard, so ho ! — there, there, surely thou couldst drink without bending thy head so low.” While he thus spoke, by a slow and cautious movement, not unlike that with which a child approaches a sparrow, to perform the difficult manœuvre of throwing salt upon its tail, he regained a grasp of the bridle-rein which the horse had twitched

out of his hand; and then went on with his story, — interrupting it, however, every now and then, to address sundry admonitions to his horse, — somewhat in the following style: —

“ Well, where was I, worthy Master Nicholas? — I was saying — so ho! beast, I say; the devil's in thee, thou wilt have me into the river. — I was saying that, after the castle was taken, and every soul put to the sword, even the poor boy, Hugh, — for which last, I hear, the Duke is very much grieved, — be quiet, Bernard, hold up thy head! — Count Adolphus himself fled away by a postern-door, and is now a prisoner in ——”

“ Nay, but, Master Martin, you said they were all put to death,” interrupted one of his companions.

“ Remember what the doctors say,” replied the other; “ namely, that there is no general rule without its exception. They were all killed but those that ran away, which were only Count Adolphus and his horse, who got away together, the one upon the other. Fool that he was to trust himself upon a horse's

back! It was his ruin, alack! it was his ruin."

"How so?" demanded Master Nicholas; "did the horse throw him and break his pate? Methought you said, but now, that he was alive and a prisoner."

"And I said truly, too," answered the other. "Nevertheless, his mounting that horse was the cause of his ruin; for though he got off quietly enough, yet, at the bridge below Namur, where, if he had had no horse, he would have passed free, he was obliged to stop to pay pontage* for his beast. A priest, who was talking with the toll-man, knew him; and he was taken on the spot, and cast into prison."

"Methinks it was more the priest's fault than the horse's, then," replied Master Nicholas;

* Philip de Comines, who relates this anecdote much in the same terms as those used by good Martin Fruse in the text, places it, however, several years later; though from the time that Adolphus Duke of Gueldres, here called Count Adolphus, was kept in prison by the Duke of Burgundy, it would seem that the time of his capture was here correctly stated.

“ but whoever it was that betrayed him, bad was the turn they did to the city of Ghent; for, what with his aid, and that of the good folks of Gueldres, and the worthy burghers of Utrecht, we might have held the proud Duke at bay, and wrung our rights from him drop by drop, like water from a sponge.”

“ God knows, God knows !” replied Martin Fruse, the burgher of Ghent, to whom this was addressed; “ God knows ! it is a fine thing to have one’s rights, surely ; but, somehow, I thought we were very comfortable and happy in the good old city, before there was any quarrel about rights at all. Well I know, we have never been happy since ; and I have been forced to ride on horseback by the week together ; for which sin, my flesh and skin do daily penance, as the chirurgeons of Namur could vouch if they would. Nevertheless, one must be patriotic, and all that, so I would not grumble, — if this beast would but give over drinking, which I think he will not do before he or I drop down dead. Here, horse-boy, come and pluck his nose out of the pool ; for

I cannot move him more than I could the town-house."

The worthy burgher was soon relieved from his embarrassments ; and his horse being once more put upon the road, he led the way onward, followed by the rest of the party, with their servants and attendants. The place of leader was evidently conceded to good Martin Fruse ; but this distinction was probably assigned to him, more on account of his wealth and integrity, than from the possession of any fine wit, great sense, energetic activity, or other requisite for a popular leader. He was, in truth, a worthy, honest man, somewhat easily persuaded ; especially where his general vanity, and, more particularly, his own opinion of his powers as a politician, were brought into play : but his mind was neither vigorous nor acute ; though sometimes an innate sense of rectitude, and hatred of injustice, would lend energy to his actions, and eloquence to his words.

Amongst those who followed him, however, were two or three spirits of a higher order ; who, without his purity of motives, or kindly

disposition, possessed far greater talents, activity, and vigour. Nevertheless, turbulent by disposition and by habit, few of the burghers of Ghent, at that time, possessed any very grand and general views, either for asserting the liberties and rights of their country, or for pursuing any plan of personal ambition. They contented themselves with occasional tumults, or with temporary alliances with any of the states and cities of the low countries; few of which rested long without being in open rebellion against their governors.

One of the party, however, which accompanied good Martin Fruse must not pass unmentioned; for, though at that time acting no prominent part, he exerted considerable influence, in after days, on the fortunes of his country. He was, at the period I speak of, a bold, brave, high-spirited boy; by no means unlike the one we have seen sleeping by the cascade, though perhaps two or three years older. He was strong and well proportioned for his age, and rode a wild young Spanish jennet; which, though full of fire, he managed with perfect

ease. There was something, indeed, in the manner in which he excited the horse into fury, gave it the rein, and let it dash wild past all his companions, as if it had become perfectly ungovernable; and then, without difficulty, reined it up with a smile of triumph, — which gave no bad picture of a mind conscious of powers of command, ambitious of their exercise, and fearless of the result. How this character of mind became afterwards modified by circumstances, will be shown more fully in the following pages.

In the meanwhile we must proceed with the train of burghers as they rode on through the wood; concerting various plans amongst themselves for concealing from the Duke of Burgundy the extent of their intrigues with Adolphus of Gueldres, and with the revolted citizens of Utrecht, for excusing themselves on those points which had reached his knowledge, and for assuaging his anger by presents and submission. The first thing to be done, before presenting themselves at his court, was, of course, to strip themselves of the warlike habili-

ments in which they had flaunted, while entertaining hopes of a successful revolt. For this purpose, they proposed to avoid the high road either to Brussels or Louvain ; and as most of them were well acquainted with the country through which they had to pass, they turned to the left, after having proceeded about a mile farther on their way, and put spurs to their horses in order to get out of the forest before nightfall, which was now fast approaching.

The way was difficult however ; and full of large ruts and stones ; in some places overgrown with briars, in some places interrupted by deep ravines. Here, it would go down so deep a descent, that slowness of progression was absolutely necessary to the safety of their necks ; there, it would climb so steep a hill, that whip and spur were applied to their beasts in vain.

As they thus journeyed on, making but little way, the bright rosy hue which tinged the clouds above their heads showed that the sun was sinking beneath the horizon's edge : the red, after growing deeper and deeper for some time, began to fade away into the grey ; each moment

the light became fainter and more faint, and, at length, while they had yet at least three miles of forest ground to traverse, night fell completely over the earth.

The darkness, however, was not so deep as in any degree to prevent them from finding their way onward, or from distinguishing the objects round about them; although it lent a mysterious sort of grandeur to the deep masses and long dim glades of the forest, made the rocks look like towers and castles, and converted many a tree, to the eyes of the more timid, into the form of an armed man.

After having gone on in this state for about half an hour, — just a sufficient time, indeed, to work up every sort of apprehension to the utmost, yet not long enough to familiarise the travellers with the darkness, — just when every one was calling to mind all the thousand stories, which were, in those days, alas! too true ones, of robbers, and murderers, and free plunderers, — the whole party plunged down into a deep dell, the aspect of which was not at all calculated to assuage their terrors, whether rea-

sonable or foolish. Not, indeed, that it was more gloomy than the road through which they had been lately travelling; rather, on the contrary, whatever degree of light yet remained in the heavens found its way more readily into that valley — where the trees were less high, and at greater intervals from each other — than into the narrow road which had led them thither, the high banks of which were lined all the way along with tall and overhanging beeches. The sort of dingle, however, which they now entered, was clothed with low but thick shrubs; and no means of egress whatever appeared, except by climbing some of the steep ascents which surrounded it on every side. There was a small piece of level ground at the bottom, of about a hundred yards in diameter, and the moment they had reached the flat, the word “Halt!” pronounced in a loud and imperative voice, caused every one suddenly to draw his bridle rein with somewhat timid obedience, though no one distinguished who was the speaker.

The matter was not left long in doubt. A dark figure glided from the brushwood across

their path, half a dozen more followed ; and the glistening of the faint light upon various pieces of polished iron showed that there was no lack of arms to compel obedience to the peremptory order they had received to halt.

As the persons who obstructed the way, however, seemed but few in number, one of the more bellicose of the burghers called upon his companions to resist. His magnanimity was suddenly diminished by a long arm stretched from the bushes beside him, which applied the stroke of a quarter-staff with full force to his shoulders ; and though a cuirass, by which his person was defended, protected him from any serious injury, yet he was thrown forward upon his horse's neck with a sound very much resembling that produced by the falling of an empty kettle from the hands of a slovenly cook. All were now of one opinion, that it was useless to contend with such invisible enemies also, especially as those that *were* visible were gradually increasing in numbers ; and worthy Martin Fruse led the way to a valorous surrender, by begging the gentle-

men of the forest "to spare them for God's sake."

"Down from your horses, every one of you," cried the rough voice which had commanded them to halt, "and we shall soon see what stuff you are made of."

The citizens hastened to obey; and, in the terror which now reigned completely amongst them, strange were the attitudes which they assumed, and strange was the tumbling off, on either side of their beasts, as they hurried to show prompt submission to the imperious command they had received. In the confusion and disarray thus produced, only one person of all their party seemed to retain full command of his senses, and he was no other than the boy we have before described, who, now taking advantage of a vacancy he saw in the ranks of their opponents, dashed forward for a gap in the wood, and had nearly effected his escape. He was too late, however, by a single moment: his bridle was caught by a strong arm before he could force his way through; and his light jennet, thrown suddenly upon its haunches,

slipped on the green turf, and rolled with her young master on the ground.

“By my faith,” said the man who had thus circumvented him, “thou art a bold young springal, but thou must back with me, my boy;” and so saying, he raised him, not unkindly, from the earth, and led him to the place where his companions stood.

The burghers and their attendants — in all, about ten in number — were now divested of their arms, offensive and defensive, by the nameless kind of gentry into whose hands they had fallen. This unpleasant ceremony, however, was performed without harshness; and though no resistance of any kind was offered, their captors abstained, with very miraculous forbearance, from examining the contents of their pouches, and from searching for any other metal than cold iron. When all this was completed, and the good citizens of Ghent, reduced to their hose and jerkins, stood passive, in silent expectation of what was to come next, — not at all unlike a flock of sheep that a shepherd’s dog has driven up into a corner of

a field, — the same hoarse-voiced gentleman, who had hitherto acted as the leader of their assailants, addressed them in a bantering tone: — “ Now, my masters, tell me truly,” he cried, “ whether do ye covet to go with your hands and feet at liberty, or to have your wrists tied with cords till the blood starts out from underneath your nails, and your ankles garnished in the same fashion ? ”

The answer of the citizens may well be conceived ; and the other went on in the same jeering manner : — “ Well, then, swear to me by all you hold holy and dear — but stay ! — First tell me who and what ye are, that I may frame the oath ; for each man in this world holds holy and dear that which his neighbour holds foolish and cheap.”

“ We are poor unhappy burghers of Ghent,” replied Martin Fruse, who, though at first he had been terrified to a very undignified degree, now began to recover a certain portion of composure, — “ we are poor unhappy burghers of Ghent, who have been seduced by vain hopes of some small profit to ourselves and our good

city, to get upon horseback. Alack! and a well-a-day! that ever honest, sober-minded men should be persuaded to trust their legs across such galloping, uncertain, treacherous beasts."

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted the man who had addressed him; "as I live by sword and dagger, it is good Martin Fruse coming from Namur. Well, Martin, the oath I shall put to thee is this, — that by all thy hopes of golden florins, by all thy reverence for silks and furs, and cloths of extra fineness, by thy gratitude to the shuttle and the loom, and by thy respect and love for a fine fleece of English wool, thou wilt not attempt to escape from my hands, till I fix thy ransom and give thee leave to go."

Martin Fruse very readily took the oath prescribed, grateful in his heart for any mitigation of his fears, though trembling somewhat at the name of ransom, which augured ill for the glittering heaps which he had left at home. His comrades all followed his example, on an oath of the same kind being exacted from each; but when it was addressed to the youth who

accompanied them, a different scene was acted. He replied boldly, "Of cloths and furs I know nothing, but that they cover me, and I will not take such a warehouse vow for the best man that ever drew a sword."

"How now, how now, Sir Princox!" cried Martin Fruse; "art thou not my nephew, Albert Maurice? Take the oath this gentleman offers thee, sirrah, and be well content that he does not strike off thy young foolish head."

"I will swear by my honour, uncle," replied the boy, "but I will never swear by cloth and florins, for such a vow would bind me but little."

"Well, well, thy honour will do," said the leader of their captors; "though, by my faith, I think we must keep thee with us, and make a soldier of thee, for doubtless thou art unworthy of the high honour of becoming a burgher of Ghent."

The sneering tone in which this was spoken expressed not ill the general feeling of contempt with which the soldiers of that day looked upon any of the milder occupations of life. Whatever kindness they showed towards

the citizen, — which was at times considerable, — proceeded solely from sensations approaching compassion. They looked upon the burgher, indeed, as a sort of inferior animal, whose helplessness gave it some claim upon their generosity; and such was probably the feeling that prompted the mild and indulgent manner in which the body of roving adventurers who had captured the Gandois travellers, marshalled their prisoners in rank, and led them away from the high road—where, though improbable, such a thing as an interruption might accidentally take place — to the deeper parts of the forest, where silence and solitude seemed to reign supreme.

This part of the arrangement, however, was not at all to the taste of good Martin Fruse; and though he certainly did not venture any opposition, yet, while led along, together with his companions, by fifteen or sixteen armed and lawless men, it was with fear and trembling that he rolled his eyes around upon the dark and dreary masses of wood, — the long profound glades, in which nothing was to be

distinguished, — and on the wild and broken rocks, which every now and then burst through their covering of trees and shrubs, and towering up into the sky, caught upon their brows the first rays of the rising moon, invisible to those who wandered through the forest at their foot.

The scene was altogether a great deal too sublime and picturesque for his taste; and he could not help thinking, as he walked unwillingly along, how admirably fitted was the place, into which he was led, for committing murder, without fear of discovery. Then would he picture to his own mind, his body left exposed beneath the green wood trees, to be preyed on by the ravens, and beaten by the wintry showers; and his heart would melt with tender compassion for himself, when he thought, how all his good gossips of Ghent would, in years to come, tell the lamentable story of worthy Martin Fruse, and how he was murdered in the forest of Hannut, to the wondering ears of a chance guest, over a sea-coal fire, in the midst of the cold winter.

He had nearly wept at the pitiful images

he had called up of his own fate, in his own mind; but, before he reached that point, a distant neighing met his ear. The horses on which he and his companions had ridden, and which were led after them by their captors, caught the sound also, and answered in the same sort; and in a few minutes after, a bright light began to gleam through the wood, which proved, on their farther advance, to proceed from a watch-fire, by the side of which a bird of the same feather with those who had captured them was lying asleep. He started up, however, on their approach; and by the congratulations which passed mutually between him and his comrades, it became evident to Martin Fruse, that a party of citizens of Ghent was a rich prize in the eyes of the freemen of the forest. It is true that he would rather have had his worth appreciated in a different manner; but the sight of the fire cheered his heart, and a sumpter horse, which the good burghers had brought with them, being led forward and relieved of its burden, the various stores of provision with which it was loaded were spread out upon

the grass, and called up more genial ideas in the mind of the citizen than those which had accompanied him on his way through the forest. The pleasures of this new subject of contemplation, indeed, were for a few minutes disturbed, by the apprehension that the captors would proceed to divide the spoil of the panniers, without assigning any part to the original proprietors. But this source of uneasiness was soon removed ; and, on being made to sit down by the fire, and invited frankly and freely to partake of all the good things once his own, the heart of Martin Fruse expanded with joy ; the character of robber acquired a dignity and elevation in his eyes which it had never before possessed ; and deriving from fat cold capon and excellent wine both present satisfaction and anticipations of future good treatment, he gave himself up to joy, and began to gaze round upon the faces of his new comrades with every inclination to be pleased.

CHAPTER III.

LEAVING the worthy burgher and his companions in the forest, we must change the scene for a while, and bring the reader into the interior of one of the feudal mansions of the period. The room into which we intend to introduce him was small in size; and, being placed in a high, square tower, attached to the castle of Hannut, it took the exact form of the building, except in as much as a portion was taken off the western side, for the purpose of admitting a staircase, on which, indeed, no great space was thrown away. The furniture of the room was small in quantity, and consisted of a few large chairs of dark black oak,—whose upright backs of almost gigantic height were carved in a thousand quaint devices,—together with two or three settles or stools, without any backs at all, a silver lamp—hanging by a thick brass chain from the centre of a roof,

formed into the shape of a tent, by the meeting of a number of grooved arches — and a small black cabinet, or closet, one of the doors of which stood open, displaying within, in splendid bindings of crimson velvet, what might in that day have been considered a most precious library, comprising about forty tomes of manuscript. Besides being decorated by these articles of furniture, the room was adorned by fine hangings of old tapestry ; but the principal object in the whole chamber was a table and reading desk, of some dark coloured wood, on which was displayed, wide open, the broad vellum leaves of a richly illuminated manuscript. The table, and its burden, were placed exactly beneath the silver lamp already mentioned, which threw a strong but flickering light upon the pages of the book ; and a chair which stood near seemed to show that somebody had recently been reading.

The person who had been so employed, however, had by this time ceased ; and having risen from his seat, was standing beside an open case-ment, pierced through the thick walls at such a height from the floor, as just to enable him

to lean his arm upon the sill of the window, and gaze out upon the scene beyond.

Through this open casement, at the time I speak of, the bright stars of a clear autumn night were twinkling like diamonds in the unclouded sky, and the sweet, warm westerly wind, breathing of peace and harvest from the plains beyond, sighed over the tops of the tall forest trees, and poured into the window just raised above them. The person who gazed over the wide expanse commanded by the tower was a tall, strong man, of perhaps a little more than forty years of age, with a forehead somewhat bald, and hair which had once been black, but which was now mingled thickly with grey; while his beard, which was short and neatly trimmed, had become almost white. His complexion was of a pale, clear brown, without a tinge of red in any part except his lips; and, as he gazed out upon the sky, there was a still calm spread over every feature, which, together with the bloodless hue of his skin, would have made his countenance look like that of the dead, had not the light of his large dark eye told of a bright and living soul within. We must take

leave to look for a moment into his bosom as he stood in his lonely study, gazing forth upon the sky.

“ And are those clear orbs,” he thought, as with his glance fixed upon the heavens he saw star after star shine forth,— “ and are those bright orbs really the mystic prophets of our future fate? Is yon the book on which the Almighty hand has written in characters of light the foreseen history of the world he has created? It may be so: nay, probably it is; and yet how little do we know of this earth that we inhabit, and of yon deep blue vault that circles us around. The peasant, when he hears of my lonely studies, endues my mind, in his rude fancy, with power over the invisible world, and all the troops of spirits that possibly throng the very air we breathe; and kings and princes themselves send to seek knowledge and advice from my lips, while I could answer to peasant and to king, that all my powers do not suffice to lay the spirit of past happiness from rising before my eyes, and all my knowledge does not reach to find that sovereign elixir, consolation for the fate of man. All that I have

learned teaches me but to know, that I have learned nothing; to feel that science, and philosophy, and wisdom are in vain; and that, hidden mysteriously within the bosom of this mortal clay, is some fine essence, some distinct being, which, while it participates in the pleasures and affections of the earthly thing in which it lies concealed, thirsts for knowledge beyond the knowledge of this world, and yearns for joys more pure, and loves more unperishable than the loves and joys of this earth can ever be. Oh, thou dear spirit, that in the years long past I have seen look forth upon me from the dear eyes of her long gone; surely, if ever the immortal being came back to visit the earth on which it once moved, thou wouldst not have left me so long to solitude. — No, no," he added aloud, "it is all a dream!

"And yet," he thought, after a pause, "the powers with which the vulgar mind invests me are not all in vain: they give me at least corporeal peace — repose from all the turbulent follies — the wild whirling nothings, which man calls pleasure, or business, or

policy—more empty, more unimportant, in relation to the grand universe, than the dancing of the myriad motes in the sunshine of a summer's day. They give me peace— repose. I am no longer called upon, with an ash staff, or bar of sharpened iron, to smite the breast of my fellow-men, in some mad prince's quarrel. I am no longer called upon to take counsel with a crowd of grey-beard fools, in order to steal a few roods of dull, heavy soil from the dominions of some neighbouring king. No, no; the very superstitious dread in which they hold me gives me peace; ay, and even power— that phantom folly of which they are all so fond, and be it far from me to undeceive them."

Thus thought the Lord of Hannut, and, like most men, in some degree cheated himself in regard to his own motives. Doubtless, the predominating feelings of his heart were such as he believed them to be. But, besides those motives on which he suffered his mind to rest, there mingled with the causes of his conduct small portions of those more ordinary desires and passions which minds of a very elevated

tone are anxious to conceal even from themselves. Learned beyond any one, perhaps, of his age and country, the Lord of Hamut was not a little proud of his knowledge ; but when we remember the darkness of the times in which he lived, we shall not wonder that such learning tended but little to enlighten his mind upon those deep and mysterious subjects, which the height of human knowledge has but discovered to be beyond its ken. Judicial astrology, in that day, was held as a science, of the accuracy of which ignorance alone could be permitted to doubt ; and the belief that a super-human agency was continually at work in the general affairs of this world, was not only a point of faith with the vulgar, but a point admitted by many of the most scientific. Magic and necromancy were looked upon as sciences. In vain Friar Bacon had written an elaborate treatise to prove their nullity : he himself was cited as an instance of their existence ; and many of the most learned were only deterred from following them openly, by the fear of those consequences which rendered their private pur-

suit more interesting from the danger that accompanied it. Although magic, properly so called, formed no part of his studies, the reputation thereof was not disagreeable to the Lord of Hannut; and it was not alone the desire of obtaining peace and repose, which rendered the awe not unpleasing, wherewith both the peasantry of the neighbourhood, and his fellow nobles throughout the land regarded him, but, mingled imperceptibly with the current of other feelings, gratified vanity had its share also. Nor, indeed, though he affected to despise the world and the world's power, did the influence that he exercised upon that world displease him. Perhaps, too, that influence might be the more gratifying, because it was of an uncommon kind; and though, doubtless, true philosophy, and a just estimate of the emptiness of this earth's pleasures and desires, might have some share in the distant solitude which he maintained, the pride of superior knowledge had a portion in the contempt with which he looked upon the generality of beings like himself. Much true benevolence of heart and

susceptibility of feeling, with a considerable degree of imaginative enthusiasm, were, in fact, the principal features of his character; but his reasoning powers also were strong and clear, and very superior to those of most men in the age in which he lived; and, as we sometimes see, these various qualities of his mind and heart rather contended against than balanced each other.

In his early youth, the enthusiasm and the susceptibility had ruled almost alone. The din of arms, the tumult of conflicting hosts, the pomp and pageant of the listed field, all had charms for him. The strength of his frame, together with the skill and dexterity given by early education, had made many of the best knights in Europe go down before his lance, and had obtained for him that degree of glory and applause which might have kept him forever one of the rude but gallant champions of the day. But then came love,—love of that deep, powerful, engrossing nature, which a heart such as his was alone capable of feeling. The cup of happiness was given to his lip but for a

moment; he was suffered to drink, one deep, short draught; and, when he had tasted all its sweetness, it was dashed from his hand, never to be filled again. From that moment his life had passed in solitude, and his days and nights had been occupied by study: nor had he above once for more than twelve years passed the limits of that forest, over which his eyes were now cast.

As he leaned upon the window, and gazed out upon the sky, pondering over the strange mystery of man's being, and the lot which fate had cast him, the last faint lingering rays of twilight were withdrawn from the air, and night fell upon one half of the world; but it was one of those bright, clear, splendid nights, which often come in the beginning of autumn, as if the heavens loved to look, with all their thousand eyes, upon the rich harvest and the glowing fruit. After he had gazed for some time, the edge of the sky began to grow lighter, and the clear yellow moon, waxing near her full, rose up, and poured a tide of golden light over the immense extent of green leaves and waving

boughs spread out beneath his eyes. All was still, and solemn, and silent, and full of calm splendour and tranquil brightness. There was not a motion, there was not a sound, except the slow gliding of the beautiful planet up the arch of heaven, and the whispering of the light wind, as it breathed through the boughs of the trees.

Suddenly, however, a dull faint noise was heard at some distance; which went on increasing slowly, till the sound of horses' feet could be distinguished, broken occasionally by the tones of a human voice, speaking a few words of order or inquiry. The Lord of Hannut listened, and when the horsemen came nearer, he gathered, from an occasional sentence, spoken as they wound round the foot of the tower in which he was standing, that the party were directing their course to the gates of his own dwelling. His brow became slightly clouded; and though hospitality was a duty at that time never neglected, yet so rarely was he visited by strangers, and so little did he court society, that he paused somewhat anxiously to

think of how he might best receive them. To throw the gates of a castle open to all comers, was not indeed at all safe in those days; and though the Lord of Hannut was, at that time, at feud with no one, and though his personal character, the strength of his castle, and the number of his retainers, secured him against the free companions and plunderers of the times, it was not, of course, without pause and examination, that any large body of men were to be admitted within the gates at such an hour of the night. He remained, however, musing somewhat abstractedly, till the horsemen, whom he had heard below, had wound along the road, which, following the various sinuosities of the walls and defences of the castle, skirted the brow of the hill on which it stood, and was only interrupted by the gate of the barbican on the northern side of the building.

Before it the travellers paused, and the sound of a horn, winded long and clearly, gave notice to the denizens of the castle that admittance was demanded by some one without.

Still the master of the mansion remained in thought, leaving to the prudence and discretion of his seneschal the task of receiving and answering the travellers; and the sound of a falling draw-bridge, with the creaking of its beams, and the clanging and clash of its rusty chains, followed by the clatter of horses' feet in the court-yard, soon announced that a considerable number of cavaliers had been admitted within the outer walls. Many voices speaking were next heard, and then, after a pause of comparative silence, a slow step echoed up the long hollow staircase, which led to the chamber we have already described. At that sound the Lord of Hannut withdrew from the window, and seating himself before the book in which he had been lately reading, fixed his eyes upon the door. There might be a slight touch of stage effect in it, — but no matter, — what is there on this earth without its quackery?

Scarcely had he done so, when some one knocked without, and, on being desired to come in, presented, at the half-opened door,

the weather-beaten face of an old soldier, who acted the part of seneschal, bearing a look of apprehension, which sat ill upon features that seemed originally destined to express any thing but fear.

“Come in, Roger, come in!” cried the Lord of Hannut. “Art thou fool enough, too, to think that I deal with evil spirits?”

“God forbid, my lord!” replied the man. “But ill should I like to see a spirit of any kind, good or evil; and, therefore, I always like to have the room clear before I intrude.”

“Well, what would you now?” demanded his lord, with somewhat of impatience on his brow. “Wherefore do you disturb me?”

“So please you, sir,” replied the seneschal, “a noble traveller, just alighted in the court below, with a small but gallant train, consisting of ——”

“On with thy tale, good Roger!” interrupted his master. “What of the traveller? Leave his train to speak for themselves hereafter.”

“So please you, my lord,” continued the other, “he bade me tell you that an old tried

friend, Thibalt of Neufchatel, craved your hospitality for a single night."

"Thibalt of Neufchatel!" exclaimed the other, his face brightening for a moment with a transitory expression of pleasure, and then turning deadly pale, as the magic of memory, by the spell of that single name, called up the scenes of the painful past with which that name was connected. "Thibalt of Neufchatel! an old tried friend, indeed! though sad was the day of our last meeting. Where is he? Lead the way!"

Thus saying, the Lord of Hannut, without waiting for the guidance of his seneschal, proceeded, with a rapid step, towards the great hall of the castle, concluding, as was really the case, that into that place of general reception the travellers had been shown on their arrival. It was an immense gloomy apartment, paved with stone, occupying the whole interior space at the bottom of the chief tower. At one end was the great door, which opened at once into the court; and at the other was a high pointed window, not unlike that of a cathedral. Arms

of every kind then in use decorated the walls in profusion. On the right side of the hall, as you entered from the court, was the wide open hearth, with stools and benches round about; and so wide and cool was the chamber, that at the time I speak of, — though a night in the early part of September, — an immense pile of blazing logs sparkled and hissed in the midst, casting a red and flickering light around, which, catching on many a lance, and shield, and suit of armour on the opposite wall, lost itself in the gloom at either end of the hall, and in the deep hollow of the vault above.

A cresset — hung by a chain from the roof, — added a degree of light, which, however, was confined to the part of the hall in the immediate vicinity of its source; and, within its influence, disencumbering themselves from some of the habiliments of the road, were seated the party of travellers just arrived, at the moment that the Lord of Hannut entered. He came in by a small door behind one of the massy pillars which supported the vault, and advanced at once towards his guests. The

sound of his footstep caused them all to rise, but the Marshal of Burgundy immediately advanced before the rest to meet his friend. When within a few steps of each other, both paused, and gazed with a countenance of doubt and surprise on the face of the other. Each had forgot that many years had passed since they last met, and each had pictured to himself the image of his friend as he had before seen him, in the pride of youth and health; but, when the reality was presented to them, both paused in astonishment to gaze upon the effects of Time's tremendous power, which they mutually presented to each other. Nor was their surprise at first unmingled with some degree of doubt as to the identity of the person before them, and of the friend from whom they had so long been separated.

“ Good God !” exclaimed the Lord of Hannut, “ Thibalt of Neufchatel !”

“ Even so, Maurice de Hannut !” replied the Marshal. “ Good faith, old friend, I scarcely should have known thee. But more of this hereafter,” he added hastily. “ See, here is a

noble prince, the Lord Louis of Valois, who demands thy care and hospitality for this night, as under my safe conduct, he journeys to visit his noble cousin, our Lord the Duke of Burgundy."

The Lord of Hannut bowed low at this intimation of the high quality of one of his guests, and proceeded to welcome the son of the reigning monarch of France, with that grave and stately dignity which the early habits of the court and camp had given to his demeanour. The forms and ceremonies of that day, which would be found dull enough even to practise at present, would appear still duller in writing than they would be in act; and, therefore, passing over all the etiquette which was observed in the reception and entertainment of the Dauphin, the supper that was laid before him, and the spiced wines that were offered him at his bedside, we will continue for a moment in the great hall, which, after he retired to rest, remained occupied by the few attendants who had accompanied him and the Marshal of Burgundy thither, and by the

usual servants and officers of the Lord of Hannut.

The presence of their superiors had restrained all free communication between these worthy personages; but between the squire of the body to the Marshal of Burgundy, and the seneschal of the Lord of Hannut, had passed many a glance of recognition, and a friendly, though silent, pinch of the arm during supper; and no sooner was Louis of Valois safely housed in his chamber, and his companion, the Lord of Neufchatel, closeted with the master of the mansion, than a conversation commenced between two of the followers, a part of which must be here put down as illustrative of those past events, which, in some degree, however slight, affect the course of this true history.

“What, Roger de Lorens!” cried the squire of the Marshal, “still hanging to the skirts of thy old Lord? Do I find thee here at the end of twelve long years?”

“And where could I be better, Regnault of Gand?” replied the other. “But thou thyself, old friend, art thou not at the same skirts

too as when last I saw thee? How is it, that after such long service thou art not yet a knight?"

"Why, in good faith, then," replied the squire, "it is that I am too poor to do honour to knighthood, and too wise to covet a state that I have not the means to hold. I have made money in the wars on an occasion too, like my neighbours; but, alack, friend Roger, no sooner does the right hand put the money in, than the left hand filches it out again. And is it, then, really twelve long years since we met? Lord, Lord! it looks but yesterday, when I think of those times; and yet when I count up all the things I have done since, and make old Memory knotch them down on her tally, it seems like the score of a hundred years more than twelve. I remember the last day we ever saw each other; do you?"

"Do you think I could ever forget it?" said the other. "Was it not that day when the pleasure-house of Lindenmar was burned to the ground, and our good Lord's infant was burned in the flames?"

“ I remember it well,” replied the other, musing over the circumstances of the past; “ and I remember that my Lord and Adolph of Gueldres, and all the rest of the nobles that were marching to join the Duke, saw the flames from the road; and all came willingly to help your gallant young Lord. He was gallant and young then. But Adolph of Gueldres cried to let them all burn, so that the lands of Hannut might come to him. He said it laughing, indeed; but it was a bitter jest at such a minute.”

“ My Lord heard of that soon enough,” answered the seneschal, “ and he never forgave it.”

“ Oh, but we heeded him not,” exclaimed the other: “ we all gave what aid we could. Mind you not how my Lord rushed in and brought out your lady in his arms, and how she wept for her child? It was but a fortnight old, they say!”

“ No more, no more!” answered the other: “ and I will tell you more, she never ceased to weep till death dried up her tears — poor thing!

— But, hark thee, Regnault," he added, taking the other by the arm, and drawing him a few paces aside, not only out of earshot of the rest of the persons who tenanted the hall, but also out of the broad glare of the lamp, as if what he was about to say were not matter for the open light: — "but, hark thee, Regnault de Gand! they do say that the spirits of that lady and her child visit our Lord each night in his chamber at a certain hour."

"Didst thou ever see them, good Roger?" demanded his companion, with a smile of self-satisfied incredulity. "Didst thou ever set eyes upon them, thyself?"

"God forbid!" ejaculated the seneschal, fervently; "God forbid! I would not see them for all the gold of Egypt."

"Well, then, good Roger, fear not," replied Regnault de Gand, "thou shalt never see them! I have heard a mighty deal of spirits, and ghosts, and apparitions, and devils; but though I have served in the countries where they are most plenty, I never could meet with one in the whole course of my life; and

between us two, good Roger, I believe in none of them, except indeed all that the church believes, and the fourteen thousand virgin martyrs."

"Why, that is believing enough in all conscience," replied Roger de Lorens; "but if you believe in no such things, I will put thee to sleep in the small room at the stairs' foot, just beneath my Lord's private chamber."

Whether this proposal was relished much or little by the worthy squire, he had made too open a profession of his incredulity to shrink from the test; and he was fain to take up his abode for the night in a low-roofed, but not inconvenient chamber, at the foot of the staircase in the square tower. He looked somewhat pale as his old companion bade him Good night; but he looked a vast deal paler the next day when they wished each other Good morning. Not one word, however, did he say either of objection at first, or of comment at last; and no one ever exactly knew how he sped during the night he passed in that chamber, though, when some months after he married a buxom dame of

Ghent, a report got about amongst the gossips, that though he had not actually encountered a spirit, he had heard many strange noises, and seen many a strange beam of light wandering about the apartment, coming he knew not whence, and disappearing he knew not whither.

He himself told nothing openly; and when the fair dame whom he had taken to his bosom, and who was supposed to be deeply learned in all the secrets thereof, was spoken to on the subject, she, too, affected a tone of mystery, only assuring the ingenious gossip, who tried to ferret out the details, with a solemn shake of the head, "that those might disbelieve the apparition of spirits who liked. As for her husband, Regnault, he had good cause to know better; though he had once been a scoffer, like all the rest of your swaggering, gallant, dare-devil men at arms."

Having now violated, in some degree, the venerable art of chronology, and, in favour of the worthy squire, run somewhat forward before the events of my tale, I must beg the reader to

pause on his advance for a single instant; and, while the Dauphin, the Marshal, and their respective trains, sleep sound in the massy walls of the castle of Hannut, to return to the party we lately left assembled round a fire in the heart of the forest.

CHAPTER IV.

FROM the middle of the fourteenth to the middle of the fifteenth centuries, and even, perhaps, to a much later period, there existed, spread over the whole continent — equally in France, in Flanders, in Italy, and in Germany — a particular class of men, whose livelihood was obtained by the sword, and by the sword alone. In time of hostility, they were soldiers; in time of peace, they were plunderers; and long habituated to reap alone the iron harvest of war, they never dreamed of turning the sword into the reaping hook — a sort of proceeding which they would have considered the basest degradation of an instrument which they held in as high a degree of veneration, as that in which it was regarded by the ancient Scythians.

In the interior of France, indeed, such a thing as peace was sometimes to be found: but in Germany, and its frontiers towards France, there existed such a number of great vassals,

and independent princes, each of whom had the right of waging war against his neighbour — a right which they took care should not fall into desuetude — that the mercenary soldiers, who at that time infested the world, were rarely, for any long period, under the necessity of cultivating the arts of peace, in their own peculiar manner, in the heart of the green forest.

During the earlier part of the great struggle between France and England, these men had assembled in bodies of thousands and tens of thousands; and, during the existence of any of the temporary suspensions of hostilities, which took place from time to time, they seized upon some town or castle, lived at free quarters in the country, and laid prince and peasant, city and village, alike under contribution. Gradually, however, these great bodies became scattered; kings found it more imperatively necessary to overcome such internal foes, than to oppose an external enemy. The nobles also leagued together to destroy any of the great bands that remained; but the smaller ones, tolerated at first as a minor evil, consequent

upon the system of warfare of the day, were always in the end encouraged, protected, and rewarded, when hostilities between any two powers rendered their services needful to each; and were not very severely treated, when circumstances compelled them to exercise their military talents on their own account. Scarcely a great lord through Germany, or Burgundy, or Flanders, had not a band of this kind — more or less formidable, according to his wealth and power — either in his pay, or under his protection. The character of the adventurers, indeed, of each particular troop, greatly depended upon the disposition and manners of the lord to whom they were for the time attached: but, upon the whole, they were a very much libelled people; and though in actual warfare they were certainly worse than the ordinary feudal soldiers of the day, in time of peace they were infinitely better than the common robber, which succeeded upon their extinction. There were times, indeed, when, under the guidance of some fierce and ruthless leader, they committed acts which disgraced the history of human nature;

but upon ordinary occasions, though they carried into the camp a strong touch of the plundering propensities of the freebooters, yet, when war was over, they bore with them to the cavern or the wood many of the frank and gallant qualities of the chivalrous soldier.

It was in the hands of a body of such men, though of somewhat a better quality than usual, that we last left Martin Fruse, the worthy burgher of Ghent, beginning to recover from the apprehensions which he had at first entertained, and to enjoy himself in proportion to the rapid transition he had undergone, from a feeling of terror to a sense of security. The balance of human sensation is so nicely suspended, that scarcely is the weight removed from our heart, when up flies the beam, as far above as it was below, and long does it vibrate before it attains the equipoise. Such, I believe, are the feelings of every human breast: though some, ashamed of the sudden transition, have power enough to master its expression, and clothe themselves with external calmness, while their hearts are really as much agitated as those

of other men. Not so, however, with good Martin Fruse : though, occasionally, in affairs of policy, he thought himself called upon to make a bungling attempt to give an air of diplomatic secrecy and caution to his language and manner ; and though, when prompted by others, he could speak an equivocal speech, and would fancy himself a skilful negotiator upon the faith of a doubtful sentence, yet, in general, the feelings of his heart would bubble up to the surface unrestrained. On the present occasion, as cold capon and rich ham, strong Rhenish and fruity Moselle, gave pledges of the most satisfactory kind for his future safety, his joy sparkled forth with somewhat childish glee ; and his good friends, the robbers, in the midst of the green forest, supplied, in his affections, the place of many a boon companion of the rich town of Ghent.

The stores of the sumpter-horse were soon nearly consumed, but it was remarked by the worthy burgher, that a portion which, by nice computation, he judged might satisfy the appetite of two hungry citizens, together with a

couple of large flasks of the best wine, were set apart with reverential care, as if for some person who was not present, but who was held by his companions in a high degree of respect. After governing his curiosity for some time, that most unrestrainable of all human passions got the better of him, and, by some sidelong questions, he endeavoured to ascertain for whom this reservation was made.

“ Oh no! no, no!” replied the personage, who had hitherto acted as the leader of the freebooters, “ we must not touch that, it is put by for our captain, who will be here presently, and will tell us,” he added, with a malicious grin, as he played upon the apprehensions of the good citizen, — “ and will tell us what we are to do with thee and thine, good Master Martin Fruse: thou art not the first syndic of the weavers, I trow, who has dangled from a beam, and one could not choose a more airy place to hang in, on a summer’s day.”

Though Martin Fruse perceived that there was a touch of jest at the bottom of his companion’s speech, yet the very thought of dangling

from a beam, — a fate which the Duke of Burgundy was fully as likely to inflict upon a rebellious subject, as the most ferocious freebooter upon a wandering traveller, — caused a peculiar chilly sensation to pucker up his whole skin : but, as his danger from the robbers was the more pressing and immediate of the two, he applied himself strenuously to demonstrate, that it was both unjust and unreasonable to hang a man either to beam or bough, after having abetted him in making himself very comfortable in the world in which God had placed him. There was something in the arguments he deduced from capon and hock, together with the terror that he evidently felt, and a degree of childish simplicity of manner, which made the freebooters roar with laughter ; and they were just indulging in one of these merry peals, when a sudden rustle in the bank above their head gave notice that some one was approaching.

“ Hold by the roots, boy,” cried a rough voice above. “ Here, set your foot here, — now jump, — as far as you can — that’s right ! Cleared

it, by St. George ! — now slip down. So here we are.”

As he spoke the last words, Matthew Gournay, followed by young Hugh of Gueldres, stood within one pace of the spot where the freebooters had been regaling. Two or three of the latter had started up to welcome him, holding high one of the torches, to light his descent ; and as he came forward, his eye ran over the evidences of their supper, and the party who had partaken of it, with some degree of surprise.

“ How now, my merry men ? ” he cried, laughing. “ Ye have had some sport, it would seem ; but, by our Lady, I hope ye have left me a share, and something for this poor lad, who is dying of hunger.”

“ Plenty, plenty for both,” replied many of the voices ; “ that is to say, enough for one meal at least ; the next we must find elsewhere.”

“ But here are some Gandois traders,” added one of the party, “ waiting your awful decree,

and trembling in every limb lest they should be hanged upon the next tree."

"God forbid!" replied Matthew Gournay. "We will put them to light ransoms, for rich citizens. Who is the first? Stand up, good man. — What! Martin Fruse!" he exclaimed, starting back, as the light fell upon the face of the burgher. "My old friend Martin Fruse, in whose house I lodged when I came to teach the men of Ghent how to get up a tumult: little did I think I should so soon have thee under contribution."

"Nay, nay, good Master Gournay," replied the burgher, "right glad am I to see thee. In truth I thought I had fallen into worse hands than thine. I know well enough," he added, with a somewhat doubting glance,—"I know well enough that thou hast no heart to take a ransom from thine old companion."

"Faith but thou art wrong, Martin," replied Matthew Gournay, laying his heavy hand upon the citizen's shoulder. "Thine own ransom shall be light, and that of thy comrades also, for thy sake; but something we must have, if it be but

to keep up good customs. A trifle, a mere trifle, a benevolence, as our good kings call it in England, when they take it into their heads to put the clergy to ransom."

"Nay, but," said Martin Fruse, whose confidence and courage were fully restored by the sight of his friend's face; — "nay, but consider that I was taken while journeying for the sole purpose of conferring with thee and Adolph of Gueldres concerning the general rising we purposed."

"Well, well, we will speak further hereafter," answered Matthew Gournay. "That job is all over for the present; and as, doubtless, the Duke has heard of our doings, it may go hard with your purses, and with my neck, if he catch me, which please God he shall not do. But we must think of some way of getting ye all back to Ghent in safety. Now, Halbert of the hillside," he added, addressing one of his old band, who was probably an Englishman like himself, "hie thee to the midway oak: thou shalt there find the old seneschal. Tell him all is safe! Bid him tarry there till to-morrow, col-

lecting all our friends that come thither; and, in the mean time, to send me the leathern bottles from the hollow tree. These flimsy flasks furnish scarce a draught for a boy; and, good faith, I will be merry to-night, whatever befall to-morrow. Up the bank, up the bank," he continued; "'tis but a quarter of a mile that way."

While the messenger was gone in search of the fresh supply of wine which the leathern bottles implied, Matthew Gournay, and the young companion he had brought with him despatched the provisions which had been saved by the very miraculous abstinence of the freebooters; and at the same time the two flasks of Rhenish disappeared with a celerity truly astonishing. Four capacious bottles, holding about a gallon each, were soon after added to the supply, and all present were called upon to partake.

A scene of merriment and joy then succeeded, which would be impossible to describe—such, indeed, as perhaps no men ever indulged in whose lives were not held by so uncertain a

tenure, — whose moments of security were not counterbalanced by so many hours of danger, and whose pleasures were not bought by so many labours and pains, that it became their only policy to quaff the bowl of joy to the very dregs, while it was yet at their lips, lest, at the first pause, circumstance, that unkind stepdame, should snatch it angrily from their hands for ever. The final explosion of their merriment was called forth by good Martin Fruse, who, after showing many signs and symptoms of weary drowsiness, declared that he should like to go to bed, and asked, with much simplicity, where he was to sleep.

“ Sleep ! ” exclaimed Matthew Gournay, “ Sleep ! Why, where the fiend would you sleep ? ”

“ I mean, where’s your house, good Master Matthew Gournay ? ” rejoined Martin Fruse, with open eyes, from which all expression was banished by surprise at finding his question a matter of laughter, he knew not why. “ It’s all very well to sup in the wood in a fine summer night ; but it’s growing late and cold,

and I do think we had better a great deal get us to our warm beds."

The only answer which he received to this speech, from the robbers, was a new peal of laughter; but at the same moment his nephew plucked him by the sleeve, exclaiming, "Hist, uncle! ye only make the knaves grin; you may sleep where you are, or not sleep at all for this night. Have you not heard how these men covet no covering but the green boughs of the forest?"

"Thou art somewhat malapert, young sir," said Matthew Gournay, fixing upon him a glance into which various parts of the boy's speech, not very respectful to the freebooters, had called up a degree of fierceness that was not the general expression of his countenance;—"thou art somewhat malapert; and, if thy uncle follow my advice, he will make thy shoulders now and then taste of the cloth-yard measure, else thou wilt mar his fortune some fine day. The boy says true, however, good Martin; here sleepest thou this night, if thou sleepest at all; so get thee under yonder bank, with that broad

oak tree above thy head, to guard thee from the westerly wind, and thank Heaven thou hast so fair a canopy. There, wrap thy cloak about thee ; ask God's blessing, and sleep sound. To-morrow I will wake thee early, to talk of what may best be done to speed thee on thy way in safety, for many of the Duke's bands are about ; and without we can get thee some good escort, thou art like to be in the same plight as the ass, who, running away from a dog, fell in with a lion."

Although Martin Fruse believed himself to be as wise as any man that ever lived, except King Solomon, he had a peculiar dislike, or rather, it may be called, a nervous antipathy, to the very name of an ass ; but, when it was introduced, as on the present occasion, in the form of a simile, to exemplify his own situation, his feelings were wounded in a deep degree. In silent indignation, therefore, for he knew not what to reply, he arose, and proceeded to the spot pointed out, where, having made himself as comfortable as circumstances permitted him to do, he lay down, and, notwithstanding

a firm determination not to close an eye, he was soon pouring forth a body of nasal music, which seemed intended to shame the nightingales for their silence in the autumn season.

The rest of the travellers took up with such couches as they could find; and the robbers, too, one by one, wrapped their cloaks about them, and resigned themselves to sleep. The two last who remained awake were Matthew Gournay, and young Hugh of Gueldres, whose sleep by the cascade in the morning had sufficiently removed the weariness of his limbs, to leave his mind free to rest upon the sorrows of the past and the dangers of the present.

With him the leader of the freebooters held a long, and, to them, an interesting conversation; in the course of which the boy narrated all the events which had lately occurred to him, — the storming of his father's castle by the troops of Burgundy; the perils he had undergone; the difficulties of his escape; his desolation and despair when he found himself a wanderer and an outcast; his long and weary journey; his adventure with the Dauphin,

whom he described as a French traveller ; and the manner in which that base and artful prince had deceived him. He told it all with so much simple pathos, that he called up something very like a tear in the adventurer's clear blue eye ; and, laying his broad hand affectionately on his head, he said, " Never mind, my young lord, never mind ; you are not without friends, and never shall be, so long as Matthew Gournay lives : for I swear by the blessed Virgin, and all the saints to boot, that my sword shall fight your quarrels, and my lance shall be at your command, till I see you a righted man. But, as you say that the Lord of Hannut is your cousin in the first degree : thither we must go for help and counsel. I know him well, too ; for my good band helped to keep his castle for him, when the black riders were about last year : and what with the troops of spirits that folks say he can command, and the company of the good fellows that I shall soon gather together again, we shall be able to do something for you, no doubt. By the way," he added, seeming suddenly to bethink himself

of some fact that had before escaped his attention, "these travellers, you say, are gone to Hannut too, and under their escort these Gandois weavers may pass unsuspected on their way homeward."

"What if they refuse to take them?" said Hugh of Gueldres.

"By the Lord, they shall eat more cold iron than they can well stomach," replied the adventurer: "but I must sleep, my young lord, I must sleep, if I would rise fresh to-morrow! Lend us thy hand to shift off this plastron." So saying, he disencumbered himself of his breastplate, and the other pieces of defensive armour which might have rendered his sleep uncomfortable; and, laying them down by his steel cap or basinet, which he had previously taken off, he wrapped the end of his mantle round his head, stretched himself on the ground, grasped the hilt of his dagger tight with his right hand; and, in that attitude, soon fell into as sound a sleep as if he had never tasted crime or heard of danger. The boy soon followed his example, and all was silence.

About an hour before daylight the following morning, Martin Fruse was awakened by some one shaking him by the shoulder. He roused himself with many a yawn, rose up, stretched his round limbs, which were sadly stiffened by a night's sleep upon the cold ground; and, in gazing round, found, by the dim light of the expiring fire, and of one or two pine-wood torches stuck in the ground, that the party of adventurers had been considerably increased during his sleep; and that they were now all busily employed in saddling horses and preparing for a march, except Matthew Gournay himself, whose grasp it was that had awakened him. He was now informed, in a few brief words, without any precise explanation, that a means had suggested itself for sending him and his companions forward towards Ghent, with less danger than that to which they would be exposed in travelling alone. For this courtesy, and for the permission to return at all, Matthew Gournay exacted, under the name of ransom, a sum so much smaller than the fears of the worthy burgher had anticipated, that he only

affected to haggle for a florin or two less, in order to keep up the custom of bargaining, so necessary to him in his mercantile capacity. A hint, however, from Matthew Gournay, that, if he said another word, the sum demanded should be tripled, soon set the matter at rest; and in a few minutes the whole party were on horse-back, and on their way to the castle of Hannut. On their arrival at the grate of the barbican, they were instantly challenged by a sentry, who at that early hour stood watching the first grey streaks of the dawn. After various enquiries and messages to and from the interior of the castle, they were led round to a small postern, and, being made to dismount, were led, one by one, by torchlight, up one of those narrow interminable stairs still to be found in every old building whose erection can be traced to the feudal period.

CHAPTER V.

It was after dinner on the following morning,— which meal, be it remarked, took place in those days about ten o'clock,— that the Dauphin and the Marshal of Burgundy rose to bid adieu to their noble host, and offered him, in courteous terms, their thanks for the hospitable entertainment he had shown them.

“ I have, my lord, a favour to ask in return,” said the Lord of Hannut, “ which will leave me your debtor. It is simply this: some worthy merchants of Ghent, travelling on mercantile affairs, as I am told, arrived here this morning, and, being fearful of encountering some of the robbers, which have given to this forest not the best repute, are now waiting in the inner court, anxious to join themselves to your train, and accompany you as far as Cortenbergh, where they will leave you, and take the short cut to Ghent.”

“Willingly, willingly,” replied the Dauphin: “by my faith, if there be robbers in the wood, the more men we are, the better.”

The Marshal of Burgundy looked somewhat grave. “I have heard some rumours, my lord,” he said, “that the men of Ghent, who, in my young day, when I frequented this part of the country, were as turbulent a race of base mechanics as ever drove a shuttle or worked a loom, have not forgotten their old habits, and from day to day give my lord the duke some fresh anxiety.”

“Nay, nay,” replied the Lord of Hannut; “these men are rich burghers, returning peacefully to their own city from some profitable excursion.”

“Oh, let us have them, by all means!” exclaimed Louis, who possibly might have his own views, even at that time, in cultivating a good understanding with the people of Ghent. At least, we know that he never ceased to keep up some correspondence with the burghers of the manufacturing towns of Flanders, from the time of his exile among them, to the last hour of

his life. " Oh! let us have them by all means. Think of the robbers, my Lord Marshal! By my faith! I have too few florins in my purse to lose any willingly!"

The Marshal of Burgundy signified his assent by a low inclination of the head; though it was evident, from his whole manner, that he was not at all pleased with the new companions thus joined to his band; and would at once have rejected the proposal, had good manners towards his host, or etiquette towards the Dauphin, permitted him to make any further opposition.

" So necessary do I think caution against the freebooters, my lords," said their host, as he conducted them towards the court-yard, where their horses stood saddled, " that I have ordered ten spears of my own to accompany you to the verge of the forest. They will join you at the little town of Hannut, about half a mile distant; and will remain with you as long as you may think it necessary."

Louis returned his thanks in courtly terms; and the Lord of Neufchatel thanked his old

friend more frankly ; but said, he should like to see the boldest freebooter that ever was born stand before the Marshal of Burgundy, though he had but four lances and four horseboys in his train. They were by this time in the courtyard ; and Louis greeted the burghers, whom he found waiting, with a familiar cordiality, well calculated to win their hearts, without diminishing his own dignity. The Marshal of Burgundy, on the contrary, spoke not ; but looked on them with a grim and somewhat contemptuous smile ; muttering between his teeth, with all the haughtiness of a feudal noble of that day, “ The rascallion communes ! they are dressed as proudly as lords of the first degree ! ”

Notwithstanding his offensive pride, the Lord of Neufchatel was far from treating the burghers with any real unkindness ; and, after the whole party had mounted, and left the castle of Han-nut, he gratified himself every now and then by a sneer, it is true ; but, whenever any occasion presented itself for contributing to their comfort, or rendering them a substantial service, the

natural courtesy of a chivalrous heart got the better of the prejudices of education. Nevertheless, his pride offended more than his services pleased; and when, after a quiet and uninterrupted journey, the two parties separated at Cortenbergh, though the Marshal left them as a set of men on whom he should never waste another thought, they remembered him long as one of those proud tyrants whose insults and oppression often goaded the people into tumults, though the time was not yet come for a successful struggle for emancipation.

From Cortenbergh, the Dauphin and his companions rode on towards Brussels, sending forward a messenger to inform the Duke of Burgundy of their approach; but, before they reached the gates of the town, they received information that the prince whom they sought was even then in the field against the people of Utrecht. Nevertheless, as a safe asylum in Brussels was all that Louis demanded, he rode on upon his way; and, being admitted at once within the walls of the town, proceeded towards the palace. His coming had been notified to the

Duchess Isabelle: and, on arriving at the barriers which at that time separated the dwelling of every prince or great noble from the common streets of the town, he found that Princess, together with the young and beautiful Countess of Charolois—the wife of him afterwards famous as Charles the Bold—waiting to do honour to the heir of the French throne. No sooner did he perceive them, than, springing from his horse, he advanced with courtly grace, and gallantly saluted the cheek of every one of the fair bevy who had descended to welcome him; and then, offering his arm to the Duchess, wished to lead her into the palace. But this method of proceeding was not at all permitted by the mistress of the most ceremonious court, at that time, in Europe; and a series of formal courtesies began, and endured for a mortal half hour, such as would have slain any queen in modern Europe. At length, the resistance of the Duchess was vanquished by the Dauphin taking her by the hand, and thus leading her forward, as he exclaimed, —“Nay, nay, lady, you are over-ceremonious towards one who is

now the poorest gentleman of all the realm of France, and knows not where to find a refuge, except with you and my fair uncle of Burgundy."

We might now pursue Louis XI. through all his cunning intrigues at the court of Burgundy : for, though then a young man, with the ardent blood of youth mingling strangely, in his veins, with the cold serpent-like sanies of policy, yet his nature was the same artful nature then that it appeared in after-years ; and treachery and artifice were as familiar to his mind while combined with the passions and follies of early life, as they were when connected with the superstitions and weaknesses of his age.

At present, however, it is neither with Louis nor with the Duke of Burgundy, nor with his warlike son, that we have principally to do, but rather with the young Countess of Charolois ; then in that interesting situation when the hopes of a husband and a nation are fixed upon a coming event, which, with danger to the mother, is to give an heir to the throne and to the love of both sovereign and people.

The subjects of Burgundy watched anxiously, till at length, in the month of February, on St. Valentine's eve, was born Mary of Burgundy, — the only child that ever blessed the bed of Charles the Bold. The baptism was appointed to take place as soon as possible : and the Dauphin was invited to hold at the font the infant Princess, whose after being his ambition was destined to render miserable. Now, however, all was joy and festivity ; and magnificent presents, and splendid preparations, evinced how much the Flemish citizens shared, or would have seemed to share, in the happiness of their Duke and his family. Even the people of Utrecht, so lately in rebellion, vied with Bruges and Brussels, Ghent and Ypres, in offering rich testimonies of their gladness ; and Brussels itself was one scene of gorgeous splendour during the whole day of the christening. The centre of the great street, from the palace to the church of Cobergh, was enclosed within railings breast-high ; and, towards night, four hundred of the citizens, holding lighted torches of pure wax in their hands, were stationed along the

line. A hundred servants of the house of Burgundy, furnished also with torches, lined the aisles of the church, and a hundred more were soon seen issuing from the palace gates, followed by as splendid a cortège as the world ever beheld. The Duchess of Burgundy herself, supported by the Dauphin, carried her son's child to the font; and all the nobles of that brilliant court followed on foot to the church.

It is not necessary here to describe the pompous ceremonies of that day, as they are written at full in the very elaborate account given by Eleonore of Poitiers. Suffice it to say, such joy and profusion never before reigned in Brussels. The streets of the city flowed with wine, and blazed with bonfires. Every rich citizen gathered round his glowing hearth all the friends and relations of his house. Comfits and spiced hippocras fumed in every dwelling; and the christening of Mary of Burgundy became an epoch of rejoicing in the memory of men.

One event of that night, however, must be noticed. The fate of the city of Ghent, whose

project of revolt had, in spite of all precautions, become known to the Duke Philip, had been left in the hands of the Count of Charolois, that prince's son; and a deputation from what were then called the three members of Ghent—that is to say,* from the burghers and nobles, from the united trades, and from the incorporation of weavers—were even then in Brussels, for the purpose of imploring mercy and forgiveness. The young Count, whose hasty and passionate nature was prone to be irritated by any thing that hurried or excited him, had been in such a state of fretful impatience during the preparations for the baptism of his child, that his wiser counsellors, who wished much that he should deal clemently with the Gandois, had concealed their arrival, in hopes of a more favourable moment presenting itself.

They were not, indeed, deceived in this ex-

* Although almost all the superficial books of modern date which refer to the ancient state of Ghent, speak of these three members or states, as the ecclesiastics, the nobles, and the commons; the statement in the text is correct, which may be ascertained by referring to the Chronicles of George Chatellain, ad ann. 1467.

pectation ; and, after the ceremony was over, and all the splendour he could have wished had been displayed, without cloud or spot, on the christening of his child, the heart of the Count seemed to expand, and he gave himself up entirely to the joy of the occasion. His friends and attendants determined to seize the moment while this favourable mood continued. After the infant had been carried back from the church and presented to its mother, and after the cup and drageoir had the been handed with formal ceremony to each of the guests, the Lord of Ravestein called the Prince's attention to a petition he held from his father's humble vassals, the citizens of Ghent ; and seeing that he received the paper with a smile, he added the information that the deputies were even then waiting anxiously without, in what was termed the *chambre de parement*. The Count's brow instantly became clouded ; but, without answering, he beckoned Ravestein, and several others, to follow him out of the Countess's chamber, in which this conversation had taken place, and at once entered the apartment in which the

burghers were assembled. There was something in the stern haste of his stride, as he advanced into the room, which boded little good to the supplicants ; and his brow gave any thing but a favourable presage.

The deputation consisted of about twenty persons, chosen from all ranks ; and amongst them were two or three who had followed to the presence of the Prince from motives of curiosity, and a desire, for once, to see the splendours of a royal court, though the reception of the whole party was not likely to be very gratifying. Amongst the principal personages of the deputation appeared our good friend Martin Fruse, who had brought with him his nephew, Albert Maurice ; and the other persons whom we have seen with him in the forest of Hannut bore him company also on the present occasion. Though the burghers of Ghent were sufficiently accustomed to harangue each other, either in the town house or the market place, and had a good conceit of their own powers of oratory, yet fear, which, of all the affections of the human mind, is the

greatest promoter of humility, had so completely lessened their confidence in their own gift of eloquence, that, instead of intrusting the supplications they were about to make to one of their own body, they had hired a professional advocate, from a different town, to plead their cause before their offended Prince.

“Range out, Messires, range out!” were the first ungracious words of the Count de Charolois ; “range out, and let me see the lovely faces of the men who would fain have excited our father’s subjects to revolt.”

By his orders, the deputies from Ghent were arranged in a semicircle before him ; and, according to etiquette, the whole party dropped upon one knee ; though some went farther, and bent both to the ground. In the mean time, their advocate pronounced a long, florid, and frothy harangue, after the manner of that day, and calling David, Solomon, and many others, both sacred and profane, to his aid, as examples of clemency, besought the Count to show mercy to the repentant citizens of Ghent.

The heir of Burgundy appeared to give

little attention to the studied and unnatural oration of the advocate, but continued rolling his eyes over the countenances of the supplicants, with a bent brow, and a smile, which — as a smile always proceeds from some pleasurable emotion — could only arise from the gratification of pride and revenge, at the state of abasement to which he saw the revolted Gandois reduced.

When the orator had concluded, the Count replied, — “ Men of Ghent, I have heard that in all time ye have been turbulent, discontented, factious, like a snarling cur that snaps at the hand that feeds it, but crouches beneath the lash : think not that you shall escape without due punishment ; for know, that it is as much the duty of a prince to punish the criminal, as to protect the innocent.’”

He paused, and no one ventured to reply, except the boy Albert Maurice, who, grasping the hilt of the small dagger, which persons of almost all ages or ranks then wore, muttered, in a tone not quite inaudible, the words “ Insolent tyrant.”

Whether these words caught the ear of any one else or not, they were, at all events, loud enough to reach that of the Count de Charolois; and, taking one stride forward, he struck the youth a blow, with the palm of his open hand, which laid him almost senseless on the ground.

A momentary confusion now ensued; the nobles and attendants interposed, to prevent any farther act of unprincely violence. The boy was hurried away out of the room; several of the deputies made their escape, fearing the immediate consequence; and the Count of Ravestein endeavoured to persuade his cousin, Charles of Burgundy, to quit the apartment, terrified lest he should proceed to measures which would throw the Gandois into open rebellion.

He was mistaken, however: the rage of the prince had evaporated in the blow he had struck; and, somewhat ashamed of the act of passion he had committed, he endeavoured to make it seem, both to himself and to those around him, not the effect of hasty wrath, —

which it really was, — but the deliberate punishment of an insolent boy.

To Ravestein's remonstrances and entreaties for him to leave the apartment, he replied by a loud laugh, demanding, "Thinkest thou I could be moved to serious anger by a malapert lad like that? He spoke like a spoiled boy, and I have given him the chastisement suited to a spoiled boy: with these men of Ghent, I shall deal as towards men."

He was about to proceed, and was resuming the stern air with which he had formerly addressed the deputies, when the Dauphin, stepping forward, spoke to him in a low tone, as if to prevent his intercession from being apparent, though his gesture and manner were quite sufficient to show the burghers that he was pleading in their behalf. The Count of Charolois had not yet learned all the intricate duplicity of Louis's character, and took it for granted that, while he interceded for the people of Ghent, he did really — as he affected to do — desire that they should be ignorant of his generous efforts in their favour.

“ Well, be it so, my princely cousin,” he replied, smoothing his ruffled brow ; “ the god-father of my child shall not be refused his first request to me, upon the very day of her baptism ; but, by my faith! the honour of this good act shall rest where it is due, — with you, not with me. Know, men of Ghent, that you have a better advocate here, than this man of many words, whom you have brought to plead your cause. My noble cousin, Louis of France, condescends to intercede for you, and ye shall be pardoned upon the payment of a moderate fine. But, remember! offend not again; for, by the Lord that lives! if ye do, I will hang ten of each of your estates over the gates of the city. What have ye there?” he added suddenly, pointing to some large objects, wrapped in violet coloured linen, and carried by two or three stout attendants, who had followed the men of Ghent to the Prince’s presence ; “ what have ye there ?”

“ A humble offering, my Lord the Count,” replied Martin Fruse, rising from his knees, and walking towards the object which had

attracted the attention of the Count de Charolois; "a humble offering from the city of Ghent to our noble Count, upon the birth of his fair daughter; though that foolish advocate forgot to mention all about it in his speech."

"Well for ye that he did so!" replied the Count; "for had he attempted to bribe me to forget justice, I doubt much whether one of the deputies of Ghent would have quitted these palace-walls alive."

"But only look at them, my Lord the Count," replied Martin Fruse, whose all-engrossing admiration of the rich presents they had brought made him insensible to the stern tone in which the Count had been speaking. "Only look at them; they are so beautiful;" and so saying, he removed the linen which covered them, and exposed to view three large and richly chased vases of massive silver. And certainly their effect upon all present very well justified the commendations which he had bestowed upon their beauty, and his censure of the advocate for not mentioning them before.

Both Charles of Burgundy and the Dauphin

took an involuntary step forward, to look at them more nearly. But the eyes of Louis, who was fonder of the examination of the human heart, than of the finest piece of workmanship ever produced by the hands of man, were soon turned to the face of his cousin; and, as he marked the evident admiration which was therein expressed, he said, with a frank laugh which covered well the sneer that was lurking in his speech, — “By my faith! fair cousin, I think the advocate *was* in the wrong.”

“Good troth, but I think so too,” replied the Count, joining in the laugh. “Well, my friends,” he continued, addressing the deputies in a very different tone from that which he had formerly used; “get you gone, and be cautious for the future how ye listen to the delusive words of vain and ambitious men: the master of our household will see that ye are well entertained with white bread, good wine, and all the dainties of a christening; and as for the boy I struck,” he added, taking a gold brooch or fermail from the bosom of his own vest, and putting it into the hands of Martin Fruse,

“ give him that to heal the blow. There, set down the vases on that table. We thank you for them; and, by our faith! we will show them to our lady there within.”

With many a lowly reverence the men of Ghent withdrew, very well satisfied to have obtained pardon on easy terms. Young Albert Maurice was found below, fully recovered from the blow he had received; but it was in no degree effaced from his memory. His uncle immediately presented him with the rich brooch which the Count had sent, never doubting but the boy would be delighted with the present; but, the moment he received it, he dashed it down upon the ground, and setting his foot upon it, trampled it to atoms. What he muttered at the same time was unheard by any one but his uncle. The effect upon him, however, was such as to turn him deadly pale; and after having tasted of the Count's wine, that he might not be suspected of disaffection, he hurried his nephew away to the house of a friendly citizen of Brussels, miserable, to all appearance, till he had got the boy free of the walls of the palace.

CHAPTER VI.

WE have now concluded one period of our tale, and must beg the reader to leap boldly over twenty years. In regard to the events which intervened, of some we shall here give a slight sketch before proceeding; some we shall leave to unravel themselves in the course of the after history.

Take any body of men, as many in number as the characters which we have introduced already, and it will be seldom found that, at the end of so great a lapse of time, the whole are still upon the busy stage of life; nevertheless, such was the case in the present instance. Time, the great enemy of man, and of all man's works, had not leagued himself with death against any of those whom I have particularly noticed. In other respects, however, he had not failed to do his accustomed work. The youth had grown up into the man; the man of middle age was

bowed beneath the load of years ; and the infant in the cradle had reached the blossoming days of womanhood.

Of her, then, whose birth and baptism we have just commemorated, we shall speak in the first place, before proceeding to notice the change which had occurred in the other characters which we have brought upon the scene. Her infancy passed in the midst of prosperity and happiness, while the territories which she was destined to inherit flourished under the dominion of her grandfather, — that wise and virtuous prince, who redeemed the errors of his early years by the generous patriotism of his latter days, and both merited and obtained, from neighbouring princes and his native subjects, the noble appellation of Philip the Good ; — and while under the eye of her own gentle mother, her education proceeded in calm tranquillity, and her home reposed in peace.

Scarcely had she attained the age of ten years, however, ere, left alone under the guidance of a severe and imperious father, she found that, according to the common fate of

those in the highest stations, her lot was to be any thing but happy. Gentle, kind, obedient, she endeavoured, by making her inclinations the slaves of her father's will, to obtain, at least, peace, by yielding to duty. Her hopes and expectations were, nevertheless, in vain. The continual perils to which Charles the Bold exposed himself, of course, kept his family in constant alarm and agitation; and the frequent and capricious changes of his policy, without obtaining for himself or his country any real advantage, only served to wring his daughter's heart.

After the death of his second wife, Isabel de Bourbon, the desire of a male heir induced him speedily to marry again; and the hatred which he had, by that time, conceived for Louis XI. made him choose for his bride, Margaret of York, the sister of the King of England. His hopes of a son were disappointed; but upon his daughter, Mary of Burgundy, his marriage conferred an inestimable benefit. Margaret of York fully replaced in kindness and affection the mother she had lost; and habituated early

herself to cares, to sorrows, and to dangers, she instilled into the mind of her step-daughter that patient fortitude which she had acquired in so bitter a school; and taught her, in all circumstances, both to bear up against despair, and to endure without complaint.

As years rolled on, the hand of the undoubted heiress of all Burgundy and Flanders became, of course, an object of ambition to many of the princes of Europe; and from the time that Mary reached the age of fifteen, to obtain possession of her person, was a matter of open negotiation and subtle intrigue to all the neighbouring sovereigns. The brother of the King of France, the Duke of Calabria, the Prince of Tarentum, and the Duke of Savoy, became successively the suitors for her hand; and her father, to each and all, held out hopes and expectations, which he either never intended to fulfil, or found cause to disappoint. The most selfish of sovereigns, and, perhaps, of men, the feelings of his child were never consulted throughout the whole transactions which followed. He looked upon her simply as an

object of policy — a human seal, which, at his will, was to be affixed to the charter of conveyance, destined to give to some neighbouring prince the succession to his vast dominions.

Luckily, however, it so happened, that Mary had made up her mind to her fate, and so guarded her own heart and feelings, that all men remained indifferent to her till the sanction of her father warranted the gift of her affections. Thus she beheld treaties commenced and broken, her hand promised and refused, without either pain or pleasure, till, at length, a suitor appeared, who, with all those advantages which could satisfy the political ambition of her father, possessed all those qualities of mind and person calculated to gain her heart. Brave, chivalrous, and accomplished, graceful and well-formed in person, and handsome in features, Maximilian, son of the Emperor Frederick, had, at the same time, all that native kindness of heart, which, giving a gentle courtesy to the whole demeanour, is far more winning than the most splendid acquirements; and such qualities might have been quite sufficient to win the

heart of the heiress of Burgundy. Other things, indeed, were required by her father ; but besides these personal qualities, he was the son of the richest monarch in Europe, the heir of the Duchy of Austria, and would be, undoubtedly, successor to the imperial throne itself. Every object seemed attained by such an alliance ; and when, after appearing for two years successively at the court of Burgundy, Maximilian demanded the hand of the beautiful heiress of the land, Mary, for the first time, heard with joy that it was promised to the new aspirant.

Long negotiations succeeded ; and it was agreed that the Duchy of Burgundy, freed from its homage to the crown of France, should be erected into an independent kingdom.

A grand meeting of the Imperial and Burgundian courts was appointed at Treves for the conclusion of the marriage ; and Charles the Bold, with his daughter, accompanied by a train of unrivalled splendour, set out for the place of rendezvous. Mary's heart beat high as she entered the ancient city ; and, now taught to look upon Maximilian as her future husband, she

yielded her whole heart to the influence of her first affection. But the greedy ambition of her father was destined to overthrow all those airy fabrics of happiness, of which her hopes, and her imagination, had been the architects. Charles insisted that the title of King should be granted to him previous to his daughter's marriage; while the Emperor, who had watched his capricious changes on other occasions, with a jealous and somewhat indignant eye, refused to confer the title he sought, till the hand of the heiress of Burgundy was irrevocably bestowed upon his son. Charles argued, and railed, and threatened in vain; and at length the Emperor, wearied with his pertinacity, and offended by his intemperate violence, suddenly broke up his court, and left him, mad with rage and disappointment, to carry back his daughter to Brussels, with a heart bleeding in secret with the cruel wounds it had received.

Other negotiations succeeded with other princes; and though Mary heard, with apprehension and terror, of each new proposal, the capricious uncertainty of her father's disposi-

tion saved her from the still bitterer pangs of yielding her hand to another, while her heart was really given to Maximilian.

In the mean time disputes and wars succeeded; the projects of her marriage languished, or were abandoned ; and while her father hastened to the last fatal field, where his military renown was extinguished in his blood, she remained with her gentle step-mother in Ghent, to weep the perils to which her parent's mad ambition exposed him, and to tremble at the sight of every packet that reached her from the Burgundian camp.

Such were the changes and events which had affected the fate of Mary of Burgundy, since we depicted her as an infant, born shortly after the arrival of the Dauphin at the Court of Brussels. Over the Dauphin himself, greater alterations still had come in the course of passing years. From an exiled prince, he had become the king of a mighty nation ; and time had stolen away all the graces of youth, and all those better feelings, and nobler emotions, which, in the freshness of early life, are more

or less imparted to every human being, whatever may be the portion of selfish cunning added to neutralise them. However beneficial might be his policy to the country over which he ruled, however much his acts might advance the progress of society in Europe, and lead forward the world to a state of more general freedom and civilisation, his objects were mean and personal, and individual ambition of the lowest kind was the motive for all his cunning schemes and artful policy. An immortal pen has, in our own day, portrayed his character with unequalled skill ; and of Louis XI., at this period of his life, nothing farther can be said, than that he was the Louis XI. of Sir Walter Scott.

Of those who accompanied him on his journey, Thibalt of Neufchâtel, Marshal of Burgundy, still remained — a weather-beaten warrior, and still, in a certain sense, a haughty noble. Though age, with its infirmities, had somewhat broken his strength, and had also softened his heart, he was ready at all times, nevertheless, to spring into the saddle at the trumpet's call : but so much, indeed, had he learned to look upon the

inferior ranks with a milder eye, that he had become rather popular than otherwise; and amongst the peasants and burghers was generally known, at this time, by the name of good Count Thibalt. The germ of pride still remained, but its operation was directed in a different manner; and young nobles, and new soldiers, who were not always inclined to pay as much respect to the old officer's opinion as he thought his due; now monopolised the scorn which he had formerly bestowed upon the citizens; while the degree of popularity he had lately acquired among the lower classes, and the deference with which they invariably treated him, contrasting strongly with the self-sufficient arrogance of some of his young compeers, soothed his pride, gratified his vanity, and made him, day by day, more bending and complacent to those whom he had formerly despised.

On good Martin Fruse, the passing of twenty years had brought, if not a green, at least a fat old age. He was not unwieldy, however; was rosy, and well respected amongst his fellow citizens for his wealth, for his wisdom, and for

his many memories of the mighty past ; and, in short, good Martin Fruse was, in person and appearance, a man who had gone happily through many changes, increasing in riches, honour, and comfort, with very few cares to prey upon his mind, and scarcely an ailment through life to shatter his body. As he had proceeded, however, experience had done its work ; and while he had become wiser, and had really obtained a greater insight into affairs of policy, he had grown less vain, and willingly restrained his personal efforts to composing the municipal squabbles of his native city, and directing the efforts of his townsmen for the extension of their commerce and the improvement of their manufactures.

His nephew, Albert Maurice, had been differently changed by the wand of the enchanter Time. His mind, indeed, was one of those firm, fixed, and steadfast essences, on which the passing of years make but little alteration, except by expanding their capabilities by the exercise of their powers. From a boy, it is true, he had grown into a powerful and hand-

some man ; and though, in partnership with his uncle, he held the peaceful station of a rich merchant of Ghent, yet he was skilled in all military exercises ; and when the communes of Flanders had been called to the field, on pressing occasions, amongst the various struggles of that eventful period, he had shown knowledge, courage, and address, which had excited the wonder, and perhaps the jealousy, of many of those noble warriors who looked upon the trade of war as peculiarly their own. Whenever he returned home again, however, from the camp, he sunk at once into the citizen ; seemed to forget or to despise his military skill ; and, though gay and splendid amongst his own class, far from courting popularity, he appeared to conceal, purposely, the deep thoughts and striking qualities of his mind. Once or twice, indeed, he had been heard to burst into an eloquent and indignant rebuke to some of the nobles, on the occasion of the haughty vexations which they continually exercised upon the lower classes ; but he seemed to regret his words as soon as spoken ; and, — as if he knew that, at some time, a fearful and

deadly contest must arise between himself and the oppressors of his class, and strove anxiously, and with a feeling of awe, to delay it as long as possible, — he avoided all matter of quarrel with the nobility of Ghent, or with the officers of the Duke of Burgundy. He seemed desirous of closing his eyes to subjects of offence; and, when he heard of a brawl in any neighbouring part of the town, or when the other young citizens called upon him to take a lead in their frequent tumults, he would either quit the place for the time, or shut himself sternly in his own dwelling, in order to avoid any participation in the dangerous occurrences that were taking place.

On one of these occasions, when the city of Ghent, though not in open revolt, was keeping up an angry discussion with the high officers of the Duke, Albert Maurice, then in his twenty-fourth year, obtained his uncle's consent to travel into Italy, for the purpose of negotiating some transactions which their house was carrying on with the merchant Lords of Venice. In that sweet climate, the nurse of arts and too often

of crimes, he acquired an elegance of taste, and a grace of manner, unknown to the burghers of his native place. He came home, skilled in many arts with which they were unacquainted; and, had his spirit been less powerful, his talents less commanding, it is not improbable that his fellow citizens might have contemned or laughed at acquirements which they had not learned to appreciate, and might have scorned the travelled coxcomb who brought home strange modes and fashions to his native land. But Albert Maurice made a show of none; and it was only upon long solicitation, or on some moment of joyous festivity, that he would sing the sweet songs of a softer people, and accompany himself with instruments unknown in his own country.

His personal beauty, and the fascinating grace of his manners, made him seem a creature of a different race, and his superiority in every quality, both of mind and body, to those around him, might have been a blessing, had he not felt it himself; but he did feel it, and of course was discontented, — and who can doubt that any thing which makes man discontented with his

state, without giving him the certainty of a better, is a curse? All eyes turned upon him with satisfaction; and many a soft, kind heart would willingly have given itself to him; but his thoughts were of another kind, and he could see none to love amongst the many by whom he was admired. The fair girls of Ghent — and many a fair girl was then, and is now, within its walls — thought him cold and proud, and blamed him for what was his misfortune, not his fault. His heart was one on which love might have taken as firm a hold as on that of any man that ever burned or died for woman since the world began: but he sought for his equal, — I do not mean in rank, for that he never heeded — but in mind; and he found none such within the sphere of all he knew.

Shut out by circumstance from the higher ranks of society, the finer feelings, the better aspirations of his soul, were matter for a thousand disgusts; and though a native sense of what is noble in itself, and just to others, made him laboriously conceal the very superiority which

he felt, as well as its consequences, yet the conversation, the manners, the thoughts, of those around him — even those with whom he was most intimately allied — were constant sources of hidden pain and annoyance. He lived amongst the people of Ghent, and he strove to live with them; and so far did he succeed, that though his talents and his occasional reserve made his townsfolk look upon him with no small reverence, the urbanity of his manners, when brought into casual contact with the other citizens, gained him a far greater degree of popularity than any general familiarity could have won.

The union of pride and ambition — and he had both qualities in his bosom — usually leads the man, whose mind is so constituted, to seek to rise into the class above him: but both his pride and his ambition were too potent for that. He was proud of the very difference between his station and himself — he had a deep and settled love, too, of his country, and even of his class; and while his ambition was of a quality which would have snatched at empire,

had there been a hope of success, the hatred and contempt in which he held the nobles were far too great for him to covet aught but the power to trample them down amongst those ranks whom they now oppressed.

Such had some of the characters, whom we have attempted to depict at an earlier period of life, become under the passing of twenty years. Time, in short, had done his wonted work on all — had expanded the bud and the blossom into the green leaf and the flower, and had changed the flower and the shoot into the ready fruit and the ripened ear. But there are others yet to be spoken of, and to them we will now return.

CHAPTER VII.

THE withering power of time, which, in brief space, can make such havoc on man, and all man's works, that friend shall scarce know friend, and grass shall have swallowed up the highways, is impotent against the ever renewing power of Nature; and in the forest of Hannut, the twenty years which had passed seemed scarcely to have made the difference of a day. Green oaks were withered, it is true; the lightning had scathed the pine and rent the beech; the woodman's axe had been busy here and there; but, in constant succession, the children of the wood had grown up to take the place of those which had fallen; and the most discerning eye could scarce have traced a single change in all the forest scene around.

Days seemed to be altered, however, and manners to have changed in the forest of Hannut; for, instead of very equivocal looking

soldiers, and travellers, who wandered on with fear and trembling, there was now to be seen, near the very same cascade by whose side we opened this book, a gay, light party, whose thoughts appeared all of joy, and to whom terror seemed perfectly a stranger. That party consisted of only three persons, besides their attendants; and mounted on splendid horses, whose high spirit, though bowed to the most complete obedience to man's will, was not in the slightest degree diminished, they rode gaily across the bridge, and paused by the side of the stream.

The first whom we shall notice — a powerful young cavalier, who might be in the thirtieth year of his age, who might be less, sun-burnt, but naturally fair, strong in all his limbs, but easy and graceful in his movements — sprang to the ground as they approached the waterfall; and laying his hand on the gilded bridle of a white jennet, that cantered on by his side, assisted the person who rode it to dismount.

She was a fair, beautiful girl, of about eighteen years of age, round whose broad

white forehead fell clusters of glossy light brown hair ; her eyebrows and her eyelashes, however, were dark ; and through the long deep fringe of the latter looked forth a pair of blue and laughing eyes — which beamed with the same merry happiness that curled the arch of her sweet lips.

Two of the attendants who followed, sprang forward to hold the bridle and the stirrup of the third person of the party, who dismounted more slowly, as became the gravity of his years. Time, indeed, had not broken, and had hardly bent him ; but evidences of the iron-handed conqueror's progress were to be traced in the snowy hair and beard, which had once been of the deepest black ; and in the long furrows deeply traced along the once smooth brow. In other respects, the Lord of Hannut was but little changed. The same dark, grave cast of countenance remained ; the same spare, but vigorous form ; though, indeed, without appearing to stoop, his height seemed somewhat diminished since last we brought him before the reader's eyes. A gleam of affectionate pleasure lighted up his counte-

nance, as he marked the graceful gallantry with which his young companion aided the fair girl who accompanied them to dismount ; and when, after having rendered his service to the lady, the young cavalier turned to offer him his arm also, with a sort of half apology for not having done so before, he replied, smiling, — “ Thou art better employed, dear boy ; think'st thou I have so far forgotten my chivalry as to grudge the attention thou bestowest upon a lady. Here, spread out here,” he continued, turning to the attendants, and pointing to the green short turf which carpeted the bank of the stream just below the waterfall ; “ we could not find a better place for our meal than here.”

By the birds which they carried on their wrists, it was evident that the whole party had been flying their hawks, the favourite amusement, at that time, of the higher classes throughout Flanders. They now, however, seated themselves to a sort of sylvan meal, which was spread upon the turf by the attendants, who, with that mixture of familiarity and respect which were usual and perfectly compatible with

each other in those days, and in such sports, sat down with the persons of higher rank, at once to partake of their fare, and assist them at their meal.

The conversation was gay and lively, especially between the two younger persons whom we have noticed. They were evidently in habits of intimacy; and on his part there appeared that tender but cheerful attention to his fair companion, which argued feelings of a somewhat warmer nature than kindred affection, yet without any of that apprehension which love — if the return be doubtful — is sure to display. Her manner was of a different kind; it was not less affectionate — it was not less gentle — but it was of that light and playful character, under which very deep and powerful attachment sometimes endeavours to conceal itself — that timidity which hides itself in boldness — a consciousness of feeling deeply, which sometimes leads to the assumption of feeling little. It was understood, however, and appreciated by her companion, who, possibly, had taken some more serious moment, when the light and

active guardian of the casket slept, to pry into the secret of the heart within.

Love, however, it would appear, is insatiable of assurances; and, probably, it was on some fresh demand for new, or greater acknowledgment, that the lady replied to a half-whispered speech, — “Certainly, dear Hugh! Can you doubt it? I will try, with all my mind, to love you; for, as we are to be married whether we love each other or not, it is but good policy to strive to love each other, if it be possible.” And as she spoke, she fixed her eyes upon her companion’s face, with a look of malicious enquiry, as if to see what effect the lukewarmness of her speech would produce upon a heart she knew to be sufficiently susceptible.

He only laughed, however, and replied, — “Sing me a song, then, dear Alice, to cheer these green woods, and make me think you love me better than you do.”

“Not I, indeed,” replied the young lady. “In the first place, I would not cheat thee for the world; and in the next place, neither song nor *pastourelle*, nor *sirvente*, nor *virelai*, will I

ever sing, till I am asked in song myself. Sing, sing, Hugh! Thou hast been at the bright court of France, and art, I know, a master of the *gaie science*. Sing the light lay you sang yester evening; or some other, if you know one. It matters not much which."

"Be it so, if thou wilt sing afterwards," replied the young cavalier; and without farther question, than an enquiring glance towards the Lord of Hannut, he sang, in a full, rich, melodious voice, one of the common songs of the day; but which was not inapplicable to her speech, as in it a lover is supposed to beseech his mistress to sing to him in each of the various seasons of the year. His song, though in a different language, was somewhat to the following effect: —

SONG.

Sing to me in the days of spring-time, beloved;
In those days of sweetness, oh, sing to me!
When all things by one glad spirit are moved,
From the sky-lark to the bee.

Sing to me in the days of summer-time, dearest;
In those days of fire, oh, sing to me, then!
When suns are brightest, and skies are clearest,
Sing, sing in the woods again.

Sing to me still in the autumn's glory ;
In the golden fall-time, oh, be not mute !
Some sweet, wild ditty from ancient story,
That well with the time may suit.

Sing to me still in the hours of sadness,
When winter across the sky is driven ;
But sing not the wild tones of mirth and gladness,
Then sing of peace and heaven.

“ A pretty song enough, for a man to sing,” observed the young lady, as her lover concluded ; “ but, as I do not choose to be dictated to by any bodyelse, I shall just sing you such a song as suits me myself, whether in season or out of season. What say you, dearest uncle ? ” she added, turning to the Lord of Hannut ; and laying the fair rounded fingers of her soft hand upon his, “ What shall I sing him ? ” And as she spoke, she raised her eyes towards the sky, as if trying to remember some particular song from amongst the many that she knew ; but scarcely had she done so, when an involuntary cry burst from her lips, — “ Good God ! ” she exclaimed, “ there are armed men looking at us from the top of the bank, — there, there ! ”

Every one started up, and turned their eyes in the direction which hers had taken. There was, indeed, a rustle heard amongst the trees; and a stone or two, detached from above, rolled down the crag, and plunged into the stream at its foot. But no one was to be seen; and, after gazing for a moment in silence, the lover beckoned one of the attendants to follow, and bounding up the most inaccessible part of the cliff, notwithstanding the fair girl's entreaty to forbear, he plunged into the brushwood, in pursuit of the person who had disturbed their tranquillity.

"You are dreaming, my fair Alice," said the Lord of Hannut; "and have sent poor Hugh de Mortmar on a foolish errand."

"Nay, indeed, uncle," replied Alice, "I dreamed not at all. I am not one to dream in such a sort. For God's sake! bid some one ride to bring us assistance, and send some of the men up to aid poor Hugh; for, as sure as I live, I saw two or three faces with steel caps above, looking through the branches of the trees. Hark! do you not hear voices? Climb

up, sirs, if you be men, and aid your young lord."

The attendants looked to the Baron; and on his part, the Lord of Hannut only smiled with an air of incredulity; when, much, indeed, to the surprise of Alice, her lover appeared above the moment after; and, springing easily down the rock, declared that all was clear beyond.

She gazed on him for a moment in serious silence, and then merely replied, — "It is very strange!" Hugh de Mortmar cast himself down again by her side, and once more pressed her to sing; but it was in vain. Alice was evidently agitated and alarmed; and finding it impossible to shake off her terror, she besought her uncle to break up the party and return to the castle, notwithstanding the assurances of all parties that she must have been deceived by the waving of some of the boughs, or the misty spray of the cataract. Finding, at length, that to reason with her was in vain, her uncle agreed to return; and the horses being led forward, the whole party remounted, and, with

their hawks once more upon their hands, made the best of their way back towards the castle of Hannut. For the first two or three miles, however, Alice continued anxiously to watch every opening of the trees on either side of the road; remaining in such a state of alarm, that her falcon's wings were continually flapping, from the agitated haste with which she turned to gaze on every object that they passed on the road. It was only when they came within sight of the vassal town, and the castle on its high rock, about half a mile beyond, that she seemed to consider herself in safety; and the long, deep breath she drew, as they passed through the barbican, announced what a load was taken off her mind when she found herself within the walls of her uncle's castle.

“ You have dwelt so long in cities, dear Alice,” said the Lord of Hannut, laughing, “ that the forest is a strange world to you, and your imagination peoples it with creatures of its own; — I shall write to your father, my good Lord of Imbercourt, to say, that he must leave you many a month with me yet, till we

have cured you of seeing these wild men of the woods."

"Nay, uncle," replied the young lady, who had by this time recovered her playful spirits, and looked up in his face as she spoke, with a smile of arch meaning; "if I were to be terrified with imaginary things, I can tell you I should not have come at all; for my maids have got many a goodly story of the castle of Hannut and its forest — ay, and its lord to boot; and in the morning after our arrival I found that they had all burnt shoes and twisted necks, with sitting the whole of the night before, with their feet in the fire and their heads turned over their shoulders."

The Lord of Hannut heard her with a melancholy smile. "And hadst thou no fear thyself, my fair Alice?" he demanded; "didst thy imagination never fill the dark end of the chamber with sprites and hobgoblins?"

"Nay, nay, in truth, not I!" replied the young lady; "such things have no terrors for me; but, when I saw three armed men looking down upon us in the forest, and thought that

there might be thirty more behind, there was some cause for terror."

The Lord of Hannut and Hugh de Mortmar, — in whom the reader has, doubtless, by this time discovered that Hugh of Gueldres, who, twenty years before, was found sleeping by the cascade, — looked at each other with a meaning smile, but replied nothing; and indeed the conversation was here brought to a conclusion by a variety of unwonted sounds which now suddenly rose up from the forest below. Seldom was it, in truth, that those wild woods rang with the clang of charging horse, and echoed to the blast of the trumpets; but such was the case in the present instance: and as the sounds came borne upon the wind through the open windows, the brow of the Lord of Hannut darkened, and his eye flashed, while the cheek of the younger cavalier flushed as if with anger.

"By the Lord! our fair Alice is right, it would seem!" cried Hugh de Mortmar; "there are more men in the wood than we thought for. What, ho! warder!" he ex-

claimed, leaning from the narrow window and shouting to some one stationed in the gallery of a tall slender tower, which, more like some Moorish minaret than any thing else, rose, towering above all the others on the opposite side of the court-yard. "What, ho! warder! what seest thou down in the woods below? —By the Lord! there is another blast," he added, as the trumpets again echoed, clanging through the woods.

The next moment the loud voice of the warder was heard in reply, — "I see a plump of spears under the arms of Burgundy, running down a handful of the green riders, — but they have not caught them yet. They come closer — they come closer," he added; "but the riders make face — they turn again, and spur on — the men at arms are thrown out; but I can see no more, my Lord; they have all got beneath the haggard hill."

"Sound the ban-cloche, ho!" exclaimed the young cavalier: "arm, and saddle! arm, and saddle, below there!" he continued, shouting to some of the groups who were assembled in

the court-yard. " I would fain see who it is," he added, turning to the Lord of Hannut, " who dares to hunt down any men in these woods, your free domain, without your good leave, my Lord."

" Beware, Hugh, beware !" said the Lord of Hannut, holding up his hand with a warning gesture.

" I will, I will, indeed, my Lord," he replied ; " I will be most cautious." So saying, he sprang down the steps into the court-yard, and, while the great bell or ban-cloche rang out its warning peal over hill and dale, he gave rapid orders for arming a small body of men ; and was springing on his own horse to lead them down to the valley below, when the warder gave notice, that the party of Burgundians he had before seen, together with a considerable body of strangers, were winding up the steep road that led directly to the castle.

Hugh de Mortmar paused ; and the instant after, a trumpet was blown at the barbican, by a squire sent forward by the party to announce

the immediate approach of the noble Lord of Imbercourt to the dwelling of his good brother-in-law of Hannut.

The gates of the castle were immediately thrown open; the armed retainers of its lord were drawn up to receive his honoured guest; and Alice ran down to meet her father, whose unexpected coming seemed a gratifying event to all. Hugh de Mortmar, however, lingered behind, and conversed for a few moments in a low and hurried tone with the Lord of Hannut; and the only words which were heard, — “It is strange that he should have done so in your domains, my Lord — a man so careful in his conduct as he is in general — they surely would never dare to attack *him*,” — seemed to show that they spoke of the events which had just taken place in the forest. While thus conversing they overtook Alice of Imbercourt, whose impatience had hurried her forward; and then dropping the subject on which they were speaking, they advanced with her even beyond the grate of the barbican, and stood on the edge of the hill, looking down upon the large

party that approached, as it wound slowly up the steep ascent which led to the castle.

The cavalcade soon came near; and it became evident, as it did so, that it consisted of two distinct bodies: the one being but partially armed, and riding under the banner of the Lord of Imbercourt; the other being clothed in steel from head to heel, and bearing conspicuous the cognizance of the house of Burgundy. The first band, however, was the most numerous, and might consist, perhaps, of a hundred men, independent of a number of grooms, horse-boys, and varlets, as they were called, leading several spare horses — some perfectly unburdened, and some loaded with large quantities of armour tied together confusedly with ropes and chains, and so disposed as not to be burdensome to the horse. The other party seemed to have no baggage of any kind; and the arms of all sorts which they employed they bore about their own persons.

Thus accoutred, both bodies wound on up the slope, glancing in and out of the scattered wood, which, now tinted with all the thousand

shades of the declining sun, clothed the ascent, and cast long marking shadows across the winding road of yellow sand. Now, the horsemen passing through the depths of the wood could scarcely be distinguished from the trees amidst which they advanced; now, emerging from the overhanging boughs, they stood out clear upon the evening sky, as their path skirted along the edge of the cliff. At first all appeared indistinct— one confused mass of horses and riders; but, as soon as they came nearer, the form of each individual horseman became defined; and gradually their features, as they wore their helmets up, could be distinguished by those who stood and watched their approach.

At the head of the first party rode a tall, handsome, middle aged man, with a countenance which was grave, without being austere. When within a few yards of the top of the hill, he threw his horse's rein to a squire, and, springing lightly to the ground, advanced with a quick step towards the party assembled to meet him. Yielding first to natural affection, he cast his

arms round his daughter, Alice of Imbercourt, and pressed her to his bosom. He then saluted frankly and kindly the Lord of Hannut and Hugh de Mortmar ; and, as he held their hands in each of his, he said, in a low and hurried tone intended to meet their ear, and their ear alone, before the rest of the party came up,—“ I beseech you, my good brother, and you, my dear Hugh—whom one day I shall call my son—whatever you may hear presently, bridle your anger. Your rights have been somewhat violated by the leader of that band behind ; but I have prevailed upon him to desist : and both because he is a high officer of our sovereign Lord the Duke, and because these times are too threatening from abroad to admit of feuds between subjects at home, I beseech ye to govern your indignation as much as may be.”

The followers of Imbercourt had halted as soon as they reached the level ground or terrace in face of the barbican ; and the leader of the second band had by this time gained the brow of the hill, and now rode quickly up to the party at the gate. He was a tall, gaunt, bony

man, of about forty, with keen eagle's features, and a look of that bold assurance which proceeds more from animal courage, and a mind continually upon its guard, than from conscious rectitude of action or design. He was armed at all points except the head, which was covered alone by its short curly grizzled hair; and his basnet hung beside his axe at his saddle-bow. Such was the appearance now borne by Maillotin du Bac, the famous Prévôt Maréchal of Burgundy, who, having been himself one of the greatest plunderers of the time, had been appointed by Charles of Burgundy to root out the bands by which the country was infested — probably on the faith of the old adage, which recommends us to set a thief to catch a thief.

“ You are my Lord of Hannut, fair sir, I presume,” said the Prévôt, dismounting, and speaking in that coarse, sharp, jarring tone of voice which is only fit for a hangman.

The Lord of Hannut answered by a stately bow, and the other proceeded: “ My good Lord of Imbercourt, here, whom I reverence and respect, as in duty bound — he being as stout a soldier as

he is a worthy counsellor — has but now prayed, or rather commanded,— for he having taken the responsibility upon himself, I have yielded of course to his injunctions,— has commanded me to desist from pursuing the brigands and plunderers, who, for many years past, have haunted this forest of Hannut.”

“ Sir,” replied the Lord of Hannut, “ I, living within the precincts of the wood itself, am, it appears, sadly ignorant of what goes on beneath its shade; for during nearly twenty years I have heard of no outrage whatsoever committed within the bounds of my domain. Had I done so — had any tale of robbery or pillage met my ears — I, as supreme lord, holding a right of exercising justice both high and low, would not have failed to clear the territory within my jurisdiction of such gentry as you mention; nor shall I certainly suffer any one else to interfere with my rights, within my own lands.”

“ My Lord, my Lord!” replied the Prévôt; “ I will easily furnish you with proof that your forest is tenanted as I say. Did we not, within

this half hour, encounter a whole party of as undoubted brigands as ever lived?"

"That you attacked some persons in the forest, Sir Prévôt, was well enough seen from the belfry of the castle," rejoined Hugh de Mortmar, with a frowning brow; "but whether they were not as honest or honestest persons than yourself, remains to be proved, and shall be enquired into most strictly. At all events, sir, you have infringed upon the rights of my uncle, which must be enquired into also. — Well, well, my dear Lord," he added, noticing a sign by which the Lord of Hannut required him to be silent; "well, well, I say no more, than that these thief-catchers grow too insolent."

The brow of Maillotin du Bac bent, his eyebrows almost met, and his left hand played ominously with the hilt of his dagger, as he muttered,—"Thief-takers!" But farther discussion was cut short by the Lord of Hannut, who exclaimed,—"Peace, Hugh! peace! we must not show scanty hospitality to any one. Sir Maillotin du Bac, we will speak farther

with you hereafter, on the subjects that you mention; and if you can prove to us that any outrage of any kind has been committed within the limits of my domain, both my nephew and myself will do our best to punish the offenders. But neither Duke nor King shall exercise, within my lordship, the rights which belong alone to me."

"Outrage, sir!" rejoined the Prévôt; "did not the men who burnt the house of the Lord of Harghen take refuge in your forests within this month?"

"Whether they did or not, I cannot say," replied the Lord of Hannut; "but their burning the house of that audacious villain, the oppressor of the poor, the plunderer of the widow and the orphan, was no very evil deed in my eyes. However, let us not bandy words here at the gate; we will speak farther this evening."

The whole party now passed through the barbican, and the Lord of Hannut gave special order to his seneschal to attend to the comfort of the soldiers, while he himself led his brother-

in-law, the Lord of Imbercourt, and a few of that nobleman's most distinguished attendants, towards the great hall of the castle.

Maillotin du Bac followed boldly, as one of the chief guests; and finding that no great courtesy was shown him in marshalling the way, he exclaimed, in a loud and intrusive voice,—
“ My Lord! my Lord! before we leave our men, I must crave that you would yield me the use of a dungeon.”

“ For your own abode, sir?” demanded Hugh de Mortmar, with not the most gracious smile in the world.

“ No, no,” replied the Prévôt, “ but for yon prisoner there;” and he pointed to a part of the court-yard, where two of his followers were aiding a young man of a powerful frame and striking appearance to dismount from his horse, which was rendered difficult by his arms being tightly pinioned behind.

“ That can be no thief, surely,” said Hugh de Mortmar; “ I never saw a nobler countenance. By his dress, too, he seems a burgher of the first order.”

“ The gown does not make the monk,” replied Maillotin du Bac, with a grim smile. “ If he be no thief, he may be somewhat worse. However, he was not taken on these territories, and therefore, my good Lord, his capture can be no offence to you. For courtesy’s sake, and for the Prince’s service, I claim the use of a dungeon for this night. He is a state prisoner, and must be guarded carefully.”

“ Be it so, Sir Prévôt,” replied the Lord of Hannut; “ thank God, all my dungeons are clear at present, and far be it from me to oppose the due exercise of your office, in the Duke’s service.”

“ Said like a worthy lord, as I always held you,” replied the Prévôt. “ Where shall we bestow him ? ”

“ Roger de Lorens,” said the Lord of Hannut, turning to his seneschal, “ show this worthy gentleman, the Prévôt of our Lord the Duke, the different prison-rooms beneath the square tower; let him choose which he will, as most secure; and when he has made his choice, give him up the key thereof. Be the prisoner under your own charge, Sir Maillotin du Bac,”

he added ; “ yet, for the honour of my dwelling I trust that you will let his treatment be as gentle as may be. Let him have wine and other refreshments to keep his spirits up, I pray you.”

“ Black bread and foul water would be good enough for him,” replied Maillotin du Bac ; “ but at your request, my Lord, he shall have better fare. Sir Seneschal, I follow you ; lead the way. Ho ! Martin du Garch, bring along the prisoner.”

Thus saying, the Prévôt of the Duke of Burgundy, — who, though a knight and a man of good family, had once, as we have before noticed, been a notorious adventurer, and had now become the great persecutor of his former comrades, — followed the seneschal of Hannut across the court-yard, towards the passage which led to the dungeons. In the mean while, the Lord of Hannut, with Hugh de Mortmar, and the Lord of Imbercourt, with his daughter Alice, advanced to the great hall, where preparations were already in course for serving the evening meal.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHILE the Prévôt of Burgundy had remained within ear-shot, Imbercourt had maintained a profound silence, or, speaking in a low familiar tone to his daughter, had appeared perfectly inattentive to what was going on beside him. No sooner, however, had they passed on through the great hall, and up a flight of steps, into a large sort of withdrawing room, in which it was the custom of the guests in those days to wash their hands before dinner, than he closed the door with his own hand, and earnestly thanked the two noble gentlemen by whom he was accompanied for their forbearance on the present occasion. "I have much, much to tell you, my noble brother-in-law," he said; "and much on which to ask your advice. Much have I also to tell you, Hugh," he added, laying his hand on the arm of the younger of the two noblemen; "but I must do it in as few words as

possible, before we are joined by that unworthy man, whom we must not offend, though he be part spy, part hangman, part cut-throat. In the first place, in your solitude here, you scarcely know the state either of the duchy of Burgundy, or of the county of Flanders; both of which are unhappily in so precarious a situation, that it will need infinite moderation, prudence, and skill, on the part of all true lovers of their country, to keep us from events too fearful to contemplate. Throughout the whole of Duke Charles's dominions, the nobles are turbulent and discontented; the citizens rebellious and insolent; and, to crown all, the Duke himself, never very temperate in his conduct, since the defeat of Granson seems to have given unbridled rein to his fury, and to have cast all common prudence away as a burdensome incumbrance."

"We have heard, indeed," said the Lord of Hannut, "of his having hanged a garrison of four hundred Swiss, which he found in a town in Lorraine, — a most barbarous and inhuman

act, which, if he commit many such, will make all good men abandon him."

"Too true, indeed," replied Imbercourt; "but I fear this is but a prelude to greater outrages."

"Ay, and to greater misfortunes," interrupted the Lord of Hannut. "If there be any truth in the starry influences, he has met with some deep misfortune already, and will meet with greater still ere long. When heard you from the Duke?" he added, seeing a doubtful smile curl the lip of his brother-in-law, as he referred to an art in which Imbercourt placed less faith than most of his contemporaries.

"Our last news is more than a fortnight old," replied Imbercourt; "the Duke was then marching rapidly towards the mountains. But it was not of his intemperance towards the Swiss I was about to speak; though his conduct to them has been cruel enough. Still they were enemies; but he seems resolved to drive the men of Ghent into revolt also; and he has commanded his prévôt to arrest any one, whether merchant, mechanic, or noble, who

attempts to pass the frontier from Ghent into France. The prisoner, that you saw but now, is the first-fruit of this precious order; that meddling fool, Du Bac, who, like the tiger, loves blood for blood's sake, takes care to fulfil every intemperate order of the Duke to the very uttermost, especially against the Gandois, towards whom he and some other of his fellows have a most deadly hatred. I can hear of no precise offence which the prisoner has committed, though his captor has shown me some letters found upon him, which he would fain construe into treason; and if they urge the matter farther against him, they will drive the men of Ghent mad outright. Why, one half of their trade is with France!"

"How is it then, my Lord," demanded Hugh, "that you do not interfere to set him at liberty?"

"I dare not for my head," replied Imbercourt. "Besides, I am not here in the capacity of counsellor: I am now, by the Duke's order, marching to join him with the small force that you see, — all, indeed, that I have been able to

raise. But to the object of my coming! Hugh, the Duke needs men, and calls angrily on all his vassals to take the field. Often and earnestly have I entreated for clemency towards your father, and my entreaties have been in vain. One good stroke in the field, however, done by your hand, were worth more than all the eloquence that the tongue of man could ever boast. Gather together what forces you can, and follow me to the camp, under the name that you have at present assumed. I will take care that you shall have the opportunity of distinguishing yourself: and, from your conduct both in Spain and Italy, I fear not but——”

“It is in vain, my Lord, it is in vain,” replied Hugh de Mortmar. “Never will I draw my sword for a man who holds my father a close prisoner: surely it is enough not to draw my sword against him; and it has only been from the hope that this fair hand——,” and as he spoke he raised that of Alice, who had been listening, with her deep blue eyes full of anxious attention——“and it has only been from the hope that this fair hand would form a

bond, which, uniting the fate of Imbercourt and Gueldres together, would render them too strong for tyranny to resist, that I have refrained, during the last year, from attempting to open the gates of my father's prison with my sword, while the oppressor is embarrassed with wars and misfortunes that his own grasping and cruel disposition have brought upon his head."

"I cannot blame your feelings, Hugh," replied the Lord of Imbercourt, "nor will I hurt you by pointing out the somewhat serious causes of offence which have induced the Duke to treat your father with so great severity; but do you, at the same time, moderate your angry terms, and remember that Charles of Burgundy is my sovereign lord, my benefactor, and my friend. I think I need say no more."

He spoke with grave and impressive earnestness, and seemed about to proceed to some other part of the subject, when the heavy clanging step of Maillotin du Bac, as he walked nonchalantly up the stairs, from the great hall, into the withdrawing room, warned the Lord of Imbercourt that a suspicious ear was nigh, and

he merely added, " We will speak more to night."

The Prévôt entered the room with a look of great satisfaction, slipping at the same time the handle of an enormous key over the thong of his sword-belt, which he again buckled over his shoulder ; so that the key, dropping down till it struck against his sword, hung by the side of the more chivalrous weapon, offering no bad type of the character of the wearer.

" Admirable dungeons these, my good Lord of Hannut," he reiterated as he entered,—" Admirable dungeons, admirable dungeons indeed ! — Your own construction, I doubt not, and a good construction it is. I defy the nimblest cut-purse in the empire to make his way thence, while this key hangs at my side. The window, indeed, the window is a little too wide ; what the devil the rogues want windows for at all I don't understand, — but it is just a thought too wide. I have known a fat young rogue so starve himself down in a week's time, that he would get through a hole that would not have passed his thigh when, first he was taken. No fear of

yon fellow below, however ; it would require a precious hole to pass his chest and shoulders."

" Pray, what is the poor youth's offence ?" demanded the Lord of Hannut ; but as the other was about to reply, the pages and varlets — as the inferior servants were called in that day, — brought in basins, ewers, and napkins, for the guests to wash, while the trumpets sounded loud without ; and, in a few moments afterwards, the whole party were seated at their evening meal.

As must always be the case in such meetings, — when the ingredients of the assembly are discrepant in themselves, notwithstanding the fortuitous circumstances which may for the time have brought them together — the conversation was broken and interrupted. Sometimes the loud swell of many voices made, for a minute or two, an unspeakable din. Sometimes one or two protracted the conversation in a lower tone, after the others had ceased ; but still, every subject that was started, dropped after a few minutes' discussion, and the parties betook themselves again to demolishing the huge piles of meat

that, according to the custom of those times, were set before them. Wine was in plenty, but all drank sparingly, except the Prévôt, and one or two of the officers who followed the Lord of Imbercourt. For his part, Maillotin du Bac seemed determined that, as far as the equality of his favours went, no jealousy should exist between the trencher and the pottle-pot. His food swam down his throat in Burgundy, and the consequences were such as are usual with men of strong constitutions and well-seasoned brains. He lost not in the least degree the use of his senses; but his tongue, on which he was never wont to impose any very strict restraint, obtained an additional degree of liberty after the fifth or sixth cup he had quaffed; and, perceiving the Lord of Hannut speaking for a few moments in a low tone to his brother-in-law, he concluded at once that their conversation must refer to his prisoner; and, resuming the subject without farther ceremony, he replied to the question his entertainer had put to him before dinner — so abruptly, indeed, that for the moment no one understood what he meant.

“ Offence, indeed !” exclaimed Maillotin du Bac—“ offence enough, I trow ; why now, I ’ll tell you how it was. We had just come out of Namur, where we had supped, — not quite so well as we have here, it ’s true ; no matter for that, we had wine enough — and we were quartering ourselves in a little village down below, when one of my fellows, as stout a hand as ever was born, got saying something civil to the wife of a draper, just at the door of her shop. What more I don’t know, but the foolish cullion took it into her head to squeak out ; when up comes my young gallant there in the dungeon, and at one blow fells my fellow, Stephen, to the ground with a broken jaw. What the devil business had he with it ? If he had been an old lover of hers, well enough ; but he confesses that he never saw her before till that moment, and must come up and meddle, because she chose to squeal like a caught hare.”

Hugh de Mortmar turned his eyes upon the Lord of Imbercourt, who bit his lip, and observed gravely, — “ Were this all the young

man's offence, Sir Prévôt, it would behove us to consider the matter better before we give way to your hankering for dungeons and cords."

"Ha, ha! my Lord," replied the Prévôt, with a grin, "not so great a fool as that either! Had I not thought to make more of the good youth, I would have split his skull where he stood, with my axe; and his punishment taking place in *chaudemelée*, as the laws of St. Louis have it, we should have heard nothing more of the matter; but I knew the gallant well by sight, — one who affects popularity amongst the turbulent folk of Ghent; and having orders to arrest all who attempted to cross the frontier into France, I laid hold of him forthwith, examined his papers, and found sufficient, with a little good management, to give him a cool dangle by the neck in the fresh air of some fine September morning. But what need I say more? You yourself have seen the letters."

"Meddling fool!" muttered Imbercourt to himself; "he will contrive to drive the Duke's subjects into revolt at home, while he is assailed by enemies abroad." This speech, however,

passed no farther than the ears of the two persons next to him. And the conversation soon turned to the bands of freebooters which, the Prévôt stoutly asserted, harboured in the forest of Hannut.

A few words passed, in an under tone, between Hugh de Mortmar and the Lord of Hannut; and at length the old noble proceeded to discuss with the Prévôt of the Duke of Burgundy the infraction of his rights which had been committed by that officer in the morning. The Prévôt, however, sturdily maintained his ground, declaring that he himself, and all his band, consisting of about forty persons, had encountered and pursued a considerable body of men, whose appearance and demeanour left not the slightest doubt in regard to their general trade and occupation. Going farther still, he appealed to the Lord of Imbercourt himself, who had come up while the freebooters were still in sight, and who actually did confirm his account in every particular.

“ Well, sir,” replied the Lord of Hannut, “ since such is the case, far be it from me to

impede the execution of justice. The maintenance of the law within my own territories I have always hitherto attended to myself—and that so strictly, that for twenty years I have heard of no outrage within the limits of my own domain ——”

“ Why, as to that, my Lord,” interrupted the Prévôt, grinning, “ we do hear that you have an especial police of your own, — a sort of airy archers of the guard, who keep better watch and ward than mortal eyes can do. Nevertheless I must not neglect my duty, while I am in the body ; and in doing it, I fear neither man nor spirit.”

“ I know not to what you are pleased to allude, sir,” replied the Lord of Hannut, frowning : “ nevertheless I may find many means to punish those who are insolent. However, as you say that you have seen evil-disposed persons in the forest, and my Lord of Imbercourt here confirms your statement, I will willingly grant you permission for one day to scour the whole of my domain from side to side ; and if you should find any one strong enough to make

head against you, my own vassals shall be summoned to give you aid. After that day, however, you must withdraw your troop, and retire, nor ever again presume to set foot within my bounds without my permission."

"One day, my Lord," replied the Prévôt, "will be hardly ——"

"I shall grant no more, sir," said the Lord of Hannut, rising from the table, in which example he was followed by several of his guests; "I shall grant no more, sir; and the concession which I make, proceeds solely from a feeling of respect for my good Lord the Duke of Burgundy. Though I rise," he added, addressing all the party from a general feeling of courtesy, "though I rise, do not hold it, gentlemen, as a signal to break off your revelry. Spare not the flagon, I beseech you; and here are comfits and spices to give zest to your wine."

Thus saying, he retired from the hall; and, leading the way to the battlements, entered into a long and, to them, interesting conversation with Imbercourt and Hugh de Mortmar,

— as we shall continue to call the son of the imprisoned Duke of Gueldres.

With all his eloquence, however, Imbercourt failed to persuade the young cavalier to join the armies of the Duke of Burgundy. To every argument he replied, that men fought for their friends, not their enemies; and such he should ever hold Charles of Burgundy to be, till Adolphus of Gueldres was set at liberty. All that could be obtained from him was a promise not to attempt his father's liberation by arms, till one more effort had been made to persuade Charles the Bold to grant his freedom upon other terms.

“ Consider well, Hugh, the peculiar situation in which you stand,” said the Lord of Imbercourt; “ the secret of your birth rests with myself and my good brother here alone; but did the Duke know that the son of Adolphus of Gueldres is still living, the imprisonment of your father would, in all probability, become more severe, and your own personal safety might be very doubtful. An ineffectual attempt to liberate your father, must instantly divulge all; nor could I, — though I have promised you my

Alice, in case we can obtain by peaceful means that which we so much desire,—nor could I, as a faithful servant of the house of Burgundy, give you my daughter's hand, if you were once actually in arms against the lord I serve."

"It is a hard alternative," said Hugh de Mortmar — "it is a hard alternative;" and as he spoke he bent down his eyes, and pondered for several minutes on the difficult situation in which he was placed.

His heart, however, was full of the buoyant and rejoicing spirit of youth; and the cares that ploughed it one minute, only caused it to bring forth a harvest of fresh hopes the next. Hard as was his fate in some respects, when he compared it with that of the young man who now tenanted one of the dungeons of that very castle, — a comparison to which his mind was naturally called, — he felt no gratification, indeed, as some would argue, at the evils of his fellow creature's lot; but he felt that there was much to be grateful for in his own. Hope, and liberty, and love, were all before him; and his expectations rose high, as he thought how much

worse his fate might have been. Such ideas led him to think over, and to pity, the situation of the unhappy prisoner; and quitting the subject of his own affairs, he demanded of the Lord of Imbercourt, whether he, as a counsellor of the Duke, could not take upon himself to set the unfortunate burgher at liberty.

“ I would well-nigh give my right hand to do so,” replied Imbercourt, “ not alone for the sake of simple justice to an individual, but for the sake of the peace and tranquillity of the whole state; but I must not do it, my young friend. I have seen the letters which this Du Bac found upon his person: they consist of little more than the murmurs and complaints of discontented citizens, such as are to be met with in all countries and in all times; and which, at any other period, would attract no attention whatever. At present, however, with discontent and turbulence spreading over the whole land; with courtiers, who find it their interest to urge the Duke on to acts of insane violence; and with a prince, whose temper and power are equally uncontrollable; those papers

may cost the young man's life, *will* probably set the city of Ghent into open revolt, and *might* light a flame in the land which would require oceans of blood to extinguish. Nevertheless I dare not interfere."

Hugh de Mortmar made no reply, but mused for a few moments in silence; and then, with a gay, light laugh, and a jest about some other matter, he left his two elder companions, and proceeded to seek his fair Alice through all the long, rambling chambers, and retired and quiet bowers, so favourable for whispered words and unmarked meetings, with which every castle of that day was most conveniently furnished.

Maillotin du Bac, in the meanwhile, continued sturdily to bear up under the repeated attacks of Burgundy upon his brain. Draught after draught he swallowed, in company with some of the old and seasoned soldiers, who were no way loth to join him; but at length the sun went down, night fell, the cresset was lighted in the large hall; and, unwillingly giving up his cup, he suffered the board to be removed, and cast himself down on a seat beside the fire, which the

vast extent of the chamber, and the little sunshine that ever found its way in, either by the high window or the far door, rendered not unpleasant even on a summer's evening. A number of others gathered round; and the wine having produced sufficient effect to render them all rather more imaginative than usual, the stories of hunting and freebooters, with which the evening commonly began, in such a castle, soon deviated into many a tale of superstition. Every one had something wonderful to relate; and such, indeed, was the unction with which many a history of ghost, and spirit, and demon, was told by several of the party, and was listened to by the auditory, that two of the Lord of Imbercourt's officers, who were playing at tables under the light of the lamp; and several others, who had been amusing themselves at a little distance with the very ancient and interesting game of "pitch and toss;" abandoned those occupations, to share more fully in the legends which were going on round the fire. Each individual helped his neighbour on upon the road of credulity and superstition;

and when, at length, Maillotin du Bac rose, from a sense of duty, to visit his prisoner, an attention which he never neglected, the greater part of his companions, feeling themselves in a dwelling whose visiters were very generally reported to be more frequently of a spiritual than a corporeal nature, got up simultaneously, and agreed to accompany him on his expedition.

Lighted by a torch they wound down some of the narrow, tortuous staircases of the building; and pausing opposite a door, the massive strength and thickness of which the Prévôt did not fail to make his comrades remark, they were soon gratified farther by beholding the inside of the dungeon in which the unhappy burgher was confined. Maillotin du Bac satisfied himself of his presence, by thrusting the torch rudely towards his face as he half sat, half reclined on a pile of straw which had been spread out for his bed; and then setting down a pitcher of wine which he had brought with him, the Prévôt closed the door again without a word. The only further

ceremony was slipping the key over his sword-belt, from which he had detached it to open the door; and the whole party, once more returning to upper air, separated for the night, and retired to rest.

CHAPTER IX.

LEAVING the brutal officer and his companions to sleep off the fumes of the wine they had imbibed, we must return to the dungeon where, in darkness and in gloom, sat Albert Maurice, the young burgher of Ghent; whom, perhaps, the reader may have already recognised in the prisoner of Maillotin du Bac.

The silent agony of impotent indignation preyed upon his heart more painfully even than the dark and fearful anticipations of the future, which every circumstance of his situation naturally presented to his mind. Wronged, oppressed, trampled on; insulted by base and ungenerous men, whose minds were as inferior to his own as their power was superior; he cared less for the death that in all probability awaited him, than for the degradation he already suffered, and for the present and future

oppression of his country, his order, and his fellow-creatures, to which his hopes could anticipate no end, and for which his mind could devise no remedy. Whatever expectation Fancy might sometimes, in her wildest dreams, have suggested to his hopes of becoming the liberator of his native land, and the general benefactor of mankind — dreams which he had certainly entertained, though he had never acted upon — they were all extinguished for ever by his arrest, and the events which he knew must follow.

That arrest had taken place, indeed, while engaged in no pursuit which the most jealous tyranny could stigmatise as even seditious. He had visited Namur with no idea of entering France — a country, on which the Duke of Burgundy looked with the most suspicious eyes — but simply for the purpose of transacting the mercantile business which his uncle's house carried on with various traders of that city. Unfortunately, however, on his return towards Ghent, he had charged himself with several letters from different citizens of Namur, to persons

in his native place. Both cities were at that time equally disaffected; and amongst the papers with which he had thus burdened himself, several had proved, under the unceremonious inspection of Maillotin du Bac, to be of a nature which might, by a little perversion, be construed into treason. The immediate cause of his first detention also — the fact having protected a woman, insulted by one of the ruffianly soldiers of the Prévôt's, band, and of having punished the offender on the spot — he knew well might, by the aid of a little false swearing, a thing almost as common in those days as at present, be made to take the semblance of resistance to legitimate authority, and be brought to prove his connection with the letters, of which he was simply the bearer, unconscious of their contents.

Under such circumstances nothing was to be expected but an ignominious death; no remedy was to be found, no refuge presented itself. Though his fellow-citizens of Ghent might revolt — though his friends and relations might murmur and complain — revolt and

complaint, he well knew, would only hurry his own fate, and aggravate its circumstances, without proving at all beneficial to his country.

Had he, indeed, seen the slightest prospect of the indignation which his death would cause, wakening the people of his native place to such great, generous, and well-directed exertions, as would permanently establish the liberties of the land, there was in his own bosom that mixture of pride, enthusiasm, and patriotism, which would have carried him to the scaffold with a feeling of triumph rather than degradation. But when his eye wandered over all those he knew in Ghent, — nay, in all Flanders, — and sought to find a man fitted by nature and by circumstances to lead and to direct the struggles of the middle and lower classes against the tyranny that then oppressed the land, he could find none, in whose character and situation there were not disadvantages which would frustrate his endeavours, or render them more disadvantageous than beneficial to the country. His own death he saw, he felt,

would extinguish the last hope of the liberty of Flanders, at least for the time; and neither zeal nor passion could offer any thing, gathered from the prospect before him, to counterbalance, even in the slightest degree, the natural antipathy of man to the awful separation of soul and body. On the contrary, every accessory particular of his fate was calculated to aggravate his distress, by accumulating upon his head indignities and wrongs. He was to be dragged into his native town amongst grooms and horseboys, bound with cords like a common thief, paraded through the long and crowded streets in mid-day to the common prison, from whence he was alone to issue to the gibbet or the block.

Such were the subjects of his contemplation — such were the images that thronged before his mind's eye, as, with a burning heart and aching brow, and with a lip that seemed as if some evil angel had breathed upon it all the fire of his own, he lay stretched upon the straw, which was the only bed that his gaoler had afforded him.

The dungeon was all in darkness; for, either from carelessness or design, no light had been left with him. But could his face have been seen, notwithstanding the agonising thoughts that thrilled through his bosom, none of those wild contortions would there have been traced, which affect weaker beings under the like pangs. His hand was pressed sometimes firmly upon his brow, as if to hold the throbbing veins from bursting outright; and sometimes he bit his under lip unconsciously, or shut his teeth hard, striving to prevent the despair which mastered his heart from announcing its dominion by a groan. His eye might have been seen full of keen anguish, and the bright red flushing of his cheek, might have told how strongly the body sympathised with the pangs of the mind; but it was all an effort to repress what was passing within, not the weakness of yielding to it. He lay quite still, without one voluntary movement — he suffered not his limbs to writhe — he tossed not to and fro, in the restlessness of agony — but remained quiet if not tranquil, though full of deep, bitter, burning, voiceless thoughts.

Thus hour passed after hour — for the wings of time, as they fly through the night of despair, are as rapid as when they cut the mid-day sky of joy — Thus hour passed after hour, from the time that the brutal Prévôt closed the door of the dungeon; and the prisoner could scarcely believe that the castle clock was right, when eleven — mid-night — one o'clock, chimed rapidly one after another, each leaving between itself and the last an interval that seemed but of a few minutes.

The single stroke upon the bell—that, echoing through the long, solitary, and now silent passages and courts of the castle, passed unheeded by the sleeping guests, and only told to the watchful warder, or the sentry, that the first hour of a new day was gone, — had scarcely sounded upon the ear of Albert Maurice when a new noise called his attention. It was a harsh, heavy, grating sound, as of some weighty body pushed slowly over a rough surface; and it appeared so near that his eye was immediately turned towards the door of the dungeon, expecting to see it open. It moved not, how-

ever: the sound still went on; and he now perceived that it did not come from that side of the dungeon.

The apartment itself was a low roofed, massive chamber, just below the surface of the earth; and seemed to be partly excavated from the rock on which the castle stood, partly formed by the solid foundations of the building itself. One single window, or spiracle, of about twelve inches in diameter, passed upwards through the thick masonry, to the external air beyond: and one of those short, massive pillars—which we sometimes see in the crypts of very ancient churches—standing in the centre, supported the roof, and apparently the basement of the castle itself; under the tremendous weight of which, a fanciful eye might have conceived it to be crushed down; so broad and clumsy were the proportions of the column, in comparison with the rudest Tuscan shaft that ever upheld a portico.

From behind this pillar, the sounds that he heard appeared to proceed; and he might have imagined that some human being, confined in a neighbouring chamber, sought to communicate

with him through the walls, had it not happened that he had caught the words of the Lord of Hannut in the morning; when, in speaking with Mailotin du Bac, that nobleman had declared that all the dungeons of the castle were untenanted. Still the noise continued, becoming more and more distinct every moment; and, as leaning on his arm upon his couch of straw, he gazed earnestly upon the vacant space on the other side of the vault, a single, bright ray of light burst suddenly forth upon the darkness, and, streaming across the open space, painted a long perpendicular pencil of yellow brightness upon the wall close beside him.

Albert Maurice started upon his feet; and perceived, to his surprise, the ray he beheld issued, beyond all doubt, from the body of the pillar itself. The reputed commune of the Lord of Hannut with the beings of another world, his dark and mysterious studies, and the extraordinary fulfilment that many of his astrological predictions were reported to have met with, had often reached the ear of Albert Maurice; but his mind was too enlightened to

be credulous, at least, to that extent to which credulity was generally carried in that age. All the fearful circumstances, too, of his new situation had hitherto blotted out from his mind the rumours he had heard; and when he had entered the castle of Hannut, he looked upon it merely as a place of temporary confinement, from which he was to be led to ignominy and death. Now, however, when he beheld with his own eyes a beam of light, doubly bright from the darkness around, breaking forth from the face of the solid masonry, without any obvious cause or means, all that he had heard rose up before his memory, and without absolutely giving credit to the different tales which he thus remembered, he was certainly startled and surprised; and held his breath, with a feeling of awe and expectation, as he gazed on the spot whence that mysterious ray seemed to proceed.

At the same time, the sound continued, and gradually, as it went on, the light expanded and grew more and more intense. At length, it became evident, that a part of the massy column, about two feet from the ground, was

opening in a perpendicular direction, slowly but steadily; and that the light issued from the aperture left by the rolling back, on either side, of two of the large stones which appeared to form the shaft. For the first few minutes, the vacancy did not extend to a hand's breadth in wideness, though to about three feet in height, and nothing could be seen beyond, but the light pouring forth from within. A minute more, however, so much increased the aperture, that Albert Maurice could perceive a gauntleted hand, and an arm clothed in steel, turning slowly round in the inside — apparently by the full exertion of its strength — what seemed to be the winch of a wheel. The form, to which this hand and arm belonged, was for some time concealed behind the stone; but, as the opening became larger, the blocks appeared to move with greater facility, and, at length, rolling back entirely, displayed to the eyes of the prisoner a narrow staircase in the heart of the pillar, with the head, arms, and chest of a powerful man, covered with armour, appearing in the aperture which their removal had left.

Beside him stood a complicated piece of machinery ; by the agency of which, two of the large stones, forming the shaft of the pillar, were made to revolve upon the pivots of iron, that connected them with the rest of the column ; and in a bracket on the stairs, was fixed the burning torch, which afforded the light that now poured into the dungeon.

Albert Maurice stood gazing in no small surprise. The feeling of awe—which, however near akin to fear, was not fear—that he had felt on first perceiving the light, was now succeeded by other sensations ; and, had there been the slightest resemblance between the personal appearance of the man who stood before him, and that of Maillotin du Bac, or any of his band, he would have supposed that the purpose of the Prévôt was to despatch him in prison—an event which not unfrequently took place, in the case of prisoners whose public execution might be dangerous to the tranquillity of the state.

Totally different, however, in every respect, was the person whom he now beheld ; for,

though his form could not well be distinguished under the armour by which he was covered, yet that armour itself was a sufficient proof, at least to Albert Maurice, that the stranger was in no way connected with the band of the Prévôt. Every plate of his mail was painted of a deep, leafy green; and even his helmet, which was without crest or plume, and the visor of which was down, was of the same forest-colour. In other respects he seemed a tall, powerful man, formed equally for feats of activity and strength.

Little time was allowed the prisoner for making further observations: for, as soon as the stones had been rolled back as far as their construction permitted, the stranger at once sprang into the dungeon; though the young burgher remarked at the same time, that a leap which would have made any other arms clang, with a noise nearly sufficient to waken the whole castle, produced no sound from those of his new visiter.

The mechanical means which he had used to procure an entrance had, at once, as we have

before said, banished all superstitious fancies from the mind of Albert Maurice, nor did even his noiseless tread recall them. The young burgher, however, still looked upon the man-at-arms with some feelings of doubt, apprehension, and astonishment ; though his own presence in the dungeon was far from seeming to surprise this nocturnal visiter ; for, advancing directly towards him, he clasped the arm of the prisoner in his gauntleted hand, saying, in a low voice, " Follow me ! "

Albert Maurice paused : and gazed upon the stranger — over whose green armour the flashing red light of the torch cast a strange and extraordinary glare — with a glance of doubt and hesitation ; but his irresolution was removed at once, by the stranger demanding, in the same clear and distinct, but low tone, " Can you be worse than you are here ? "

" Lead on," he replied ; " I follow you."

" Pass through," said the stranger, pointing with his hand to the aperture in the column. Albert Maurice again hesitated : but a moment's thought upon the hopelessness of his

situation — the inefficacy of resistance, even if any thing evil were meditated against him — the thought, too, that it were better to die, murdered in a prison, than to be exposed a spectacle to the multitude by public execution, mingled with a strong hope, that relief was at hand, though he knew not whence that relief might come — made him cast away all doubts; and, stepping over the mass of stone, below the aperture, he found himself in a staircase only sufficiently large to admit the ascent or descent of one person at a time. The secret entrance, which it afforded to that dungeon, seemed its only object; for, to all appearance, it was carried up no farther through the column; the space above being occupied by the machinery for moving the blocks of stone.

“Descend a few steps,” said the stranger, “that I may close the passage.” And as soon as he found himself obeyed, he also entered the column; and applying the full strength of his powerful arm to the winch which moved the machinery, he succeeded, in a few minutes, in rolling the heavy blocks which filled up the aperture of the column, so exactly back into

their places in the masonry, that not even in the inside could it be seen that they did not form a part of the wall of the staircase. When this was accomplished, he said, in the same brief manner in which he had before spoken, "Go on!" and then followed the prisoner, holding the torch as far before him as possible, to let the other see the way as he descended step by step. After having proceeded for about fifteen or twenty yards, Albert Maurice found his further progress opposed by a strong oaken door, but it proved unlocked; and having pushed it open by the desire of his conductor, he stepped forth into a small vaulted chamber, not unlike the dungeon he had just left. Various objects, however, which, by the light of another torch that was there burning, he beheld strewn about in different parts of the room, showed him at once that the purposes to which it was applied were very different from those to which the other was appropriated. Several cloaks and gowns, of many kinds, were piled upon a bench close to the door; and across them leaned, with one end resting on the floor, a common pike or reiter's lance, and a large two-

handed sword. A barrel of wine, as it seemed, occupied one corner of the apartment; and in the midst was placed a table, on which stood a large leathern bottle, or *bottiau*, with two or three drinking horns,

Sitting on a bench at the far end of this table, and on which his head and arms rested, was a man apparently sound asleep. He was armed all but his head, which was covered alone by its own long tangled black hair; but his armour was of a very different kind from that of the stranger who had guided Albert Maurice thither, consisting alone of one of those light suits of body mail, which were called brigandines; and the common use of which, amongst the lawless soldiers of the day, had acquired for them the name of brigands. The general hue of his whole dress, however, was green, like his companion's, and Albert Maurice was soon led to conceive, that he was in the hands of a party of those bold adventurers, who had succeeded the schwarz reiters, or black horsemen, and had obtained, from the general colour of their dress, the title of green riders. It is true

that the latter had displayed, upon all occasions, a much more generous and noble spirit than their predecessors, whose sole trade was blood and carnage. As they abstained totally from plundering the peasants, and directed their attacks in general against persons who were in some way obnoxious to the better part of the population, the green riders were far from unpopular throughout the country. Many of them were known to show themselves familiarly at village feasts and merry-makings; and upon the borders of France and Flanders, their general name had been changed, from these circumstances, into that of *Les verts Gallants*, though it seemed that their principal leader was more particularly distinguished by this appellation. Nor was this the only effect of their popularity, which produced for themselves a much more beneficial result, by making both peasant and burgher, and even many of the feudal lords themselves, anxious to connive at the escape of the green riders, whenever they were pursued by very superior bodies of troops.

Into the hands of some one of their parties Albert Maurice now clearly saw that he had

fallen; and as the sort of romantic life which they led had caused a thousand stories to be spread concerning them — some strange and extraordinary enough, but none more common than that of their finding access into towns and castles without any visible means, — their connection with the dwelling which he was just quitting required no explanation to the young citizen.

The moment he had entered the chamber which we have just described, the Vert Gallant, as we shall henceforth term the person who had led Albert Maurice thither, closed the heavy door which cut off the communication with the staircase, and locked and barred it with no small precaution. Advancing towards the table, he shook the slumberer by the shoulder, who starting up, merely required a sign to place himself in the position of a sentry, at the mouth of a dark passage which entered the other side of the chamber.

“ Now, sir burgher,” said the Vert Gallant, approaching towards Albert Maurice, “ You have penetrated into places which the eye of none of your cast or craft ever beheld before ;

and, as you have been led thither solely for your benefit and safety, you must take a serious oath, for the security of those who have conferred upon you so great a favour."

"That I will willingly," replied Albert Maurice, "although Heaven only knows whether it may prove a benefit to me or not."

"Rule yourself by my directions," replied the other, "and fear not for the result; but first for the oath." So saying, he unsheathed his sword, and holding up the cross which formed the hilt, before the eyes of the young burgher, he added, "Swear by this blessed symbol of our salvation, by your faith in the Saviour who died upon the cross, by your hope for his aid at your utmost need, by all that you hold dear upon the earth and sacred beyond the earth, never to reveal, by word, sign, or token, or in any other manner whatever, any thing that you have seen from the moment that you quitted the dungeon above, or that you may see as I lead you hence."

"Willingly do I swear," replied Albert Maurice, and he pressed the hilt of the sword

upon his lips. "Nevertheless," he added, "for the security of all, fair sir, I would rather that, by bandaging my eyes, you should take from me the means of betraying you, even if I would."

"Hast thou no confidence in thine own honour?" demanded the Vert Gallant. "If so, by the Lord I regret that I took the trouble to save so scurvy a clown."

The eye of the prisoner flashed, and his cheek grew red; but, after a moment's pause, he replied, "Not so. It is not that I doubt my own honour, for I have sworn not to betray you, or to reveal any thing that I may see; and that torture has not yet been invented by the demons who are permitted to rule so much upon our earth, that could tear from me one word in violation of that oath. Nevertheless, sir, I would rather be able to say that I cannot, than that I will not tell, and therefore I proposed the means at which you scoff without cause."

"Thou art right, and I am wrong, stranger," answered the other. "Be it so then. With this scarf I will bind up thine eyes. But first," he

added, "take a draught of this wine, for thou wilt have to travel far ere morning."

So saying, he filled one of the horns upon the table to the brim, and presented it to the young burgher, who drank it off. The Vert Gallant himself, however, did not unclothe the visor of his helmet, to partake of the beverage he gave to the other. As soon as the young citizen had drained the cup, his guide took the scarf from the bench, and bound it over his eyes, saying with a light laugh, as he did so, "I am clumsy at the work with these gauntlets on, but better have my fingers busy at thy temples, than the hangman's busy at thy neck. Now give me thy hand," he added; "the way is rough, so mind thy footing as we go."

Albert Maurice was now led forward to the mouth of the passage, at which the other adventurer stood; and he then advanced for some way over an uneven pavement, till at length he was told that there were steps to descend. Of these there were about thirty, and he remarked, as he went down, that the air became very close and oppressive. He thought, too,

that he heard many voices speaking and laughing beyond; and as he proceeded, it became clear that it was so, for by the time he and his guide had reached the bottom of the descent, the sound of merriment burst clear upon his ear. "Now, pause for a moment," said his companion, and at the same time he struck three hard blows with his mailed hand, upon what seemed to be a door. All instantly became silent within, and then a single blow upon the wood-work was struck from the other side. It was answered in the same manner, by one stroke more; and in the next moment — after the clattering and grating caused by the turning of more than one key, and by the removing of more than one large bar — the door was apparently thrown open, and Albert Maurice could tell, by the freer air that he breathed, that he was led forward into some apartment of much larger dimensions than any he had yet seen. No voice was heard; but the sound of moving feet, and seats pushed on one side, as well as the steam of wine and dressed meats, showed clearly that they had now entered

some scene of late or present festivity. The person who had conducted him thither soon let go his hand, but at the same time he heard his voice, exclaiming, "Now, unbind his eyes for a few minutes! Have my orders been obeyed?"

While several voices were busily answering this question, by detailing the despatch of a number of messengers, as it seemed, in different directions, and for purposes which Albert Maurice could not gather from what was said, two persons undid the scarf which covered his eyes, and he suddenly found himself in a scene which may need a more detailed description.

The apartment in which he stood, if apartment it could be called, was neither more nor less than an immense cavern, or excavation in the limestone rock, from which, as it bore evidently the traces of human labour, it is probable that at some remote period the stone for constructing one or several large buildings had been hewn out. In height it might be twenty or five and twenty feet, and in width it was considerably more; the length was about eighty

yards, and the farther end, on one side, was closed by a wooden partition. Over head the rock was left rough and irregular, but the sides, to very near the top, were perpendicular, and tolerably smooth, while the floor, or rather the ground, had of course been made as level as possible in its original construction, for the purpose of rolling out the blocks of stone with greater facility. Extending down the centre of this spacious apartment was a table, covered with various sorts of food. The viands which it sustained consisted chiefly of immense masses of solid meat, amongst which, though beef and mutton bore a certain share, yet the stag, the wild boar, and the fallow deer, with other of the forest tenants, had contributed not a little to make up the entertainment. On either side of this table, which, by the way, was itself formed of planks, on which the traces of the saw were much more evident than those of the plane, were ranged an innumerable multitude of benches, stools, and settles of the same rude description. From these had risen up, as it seemed, on the entrance of the prisoner and his companion,

the mixed population of the cavern, consisting of nearly two hundred cavaliers, as sturdy, and, apparently, as veteran as ever mounted horse or drew a sword; and, when the bandage was removed from the eyes of the young citizen, he found that a number of those whose habiliments seemed to point them out as the most distinguished, were thronging round the person who had led him thither.

“ John and Nicholas have gone to the west,” cried one, “ to tell the band of St. Bavon to keep beyond Ramilies.”—“ Adolph of Sluy,” cried another, “ has tidings by this time that he must remain within the bounds of Liege.”—“ The little monk, too,” said an old, white-headed man, of a florid, healthy complexion, which showed that time had hitherto wrestled with him nearly in vain,—“ the little monk, too, is trotting away on his mule towards Mierdorp, though he complained bitterly of being obliged to set out before the feast was on the table, and has carried away, in his wallet, a roasted hare from the fire, as long as my arm, and a bottle of the old Bonne that we got out of the cellar of Ambly.”

“ He shall feast well another time for his pains,” replied the Vert Gallant, moving towards the head of the table, at which a large armed chair stood vacant, — “ he shall feast well another time for his pains, good Matthew ; but we must make this stranger taste of our hospitality while the horses are saddling without. Sit down, sir citizen,” he added, turning to Albert Maurice, “ sit down, and refresh yourself before you go ;” and he pointed to a vacant seat by his side.

“ I thank you, sir,” replied the young citizen ; “ but the grief I have undergone, and the anxieties I have suffered, have dulled the edge of appetite with me more than the banquet of a prince could have done ; and I would fain see myself once more upon my road to Ghent, if such be the fate intended for me.”

“ Ha ! ha !” exclaimed the old man whom we have before noticed. “ See what frail things these burghers are, that a little anxiety and fear should take away their appetite ; but thou wilt drink, good friend, if thou wilt not eat. Here, merry men all, fill to the brim, and drink

with me to our noble leader, — ‘ Here ’s to the Vert Gallant of Hannut ! ’ ”

The proposal was like an electric shock to all. Each man started on his feet, and with loud voice and overflowing cup, drank, “ To the Vert Gallant of Hannut ! and may the sword soon restore him to what the sword took from him ! ”

“ Thank you, my friends, thank you,” replied the Vert Gallant, as soon as their acclamation had subsided, — “ I drink to you all, with many thanks,” and so saying, he raised the visor of his helmet sufficiently to allow himself to bring the cup to his lip. The eye of the young burgher fixed eagerly upon him, anxious, as may be well supposed, to behold the countenance of a man holding such an extraordinary station. What was his surprise, however, when the small degree in which the leader of the green riders suffered his face to appear, exposed to view the countenance of a negro.

CHAPTER X.

AN involuntary exclamation of astonishment burst from the lips of Albert Maurice, and the Vert Gallant instantly closed his helmet.

“ Now, sir citizen,” he said, without noticing the other’s surprise, “ we will once more forward on our way. Some one bind his eyes again; and you, good Matthew, lend me your ear for a moment. Mark well,” he said, speaking in a lower voice, — “ mark well that all the precautions are taken which I ordered. Be sure the tracks of the horses’ feet, for more than a mile, be completely effaced. Roll the large stones down, as I told you, over the mouth, and let not a man show his head during the whole day. If, notwithstanding all, you should be discovered, and the fools will rush upon their fate, send round fifty men by the back of the rock, and, on your life, let not one of the band escape. I say not slay them: take every man

to mercy that is willing ; but suffer not one living man to pass the bounds of the forest if they once discover you. If, however, they miss the track entirely, as doubtless they will, then, should I not see you before to-morrow night, pick me out fifty of the best riders, and the quickest handed men ; let their horses be saddled, and not a break in their mail ; for I do not purpose that this Prévôt should hie him back to Brussels without being met withal."

By the time he had given these directions, the scarf was once more bound round the eyes of Albert Maurice, and he was again led forward by the hand, apparently passing through several halls and passages. In one instance, the peculiar smell of horses, and the various sounds that he heard, convinced him that he was going through a stable ; and, in a few minutes after, receiving a caution to walk carefully, he was guided down a steep descent, at the end of which the free open air blew cool upon his cheek. The bandage was not removed, however, for some moments, though, by feeling the grass and withered leaves beneath his feet, he discovered

that he was once more under the boughs of the forest.

At length the voice of him who had been his conductor throughout, desired him to halt, and uncover his eyes, which he accordingly did, and found himself, as he expected, in the deepest part of the wood.

“ Now follow me on, sir citizen,” said the Vert Gallant, “ and as we go, I will tell you how you must conduct yourself. Make your way straight to Mierdorp, where you will arrive probably in the grey of the dawn. As you are going into the village, you will be joined by a certain monk, to whom you will say, ‘ Good morrow, Father Barnabas,’ and he will immediately conduct you on your road towards Namur. Halt with him at the village where you were first arrested. Speak with the syndic, or deacon, or any other officer of the place, and get together all the written testimony you can concerning the cause of your arrest; then return to Ghent if you will. It may be that no accuser ever will appear against you, but if there should, boldly appeal to the Princess

Mary, who is left behind by her father at Ghent. State the real circumstances which caused your arrest at the Gembloux, and call upon your accuser to bring forward any proofs against you. But mark well, and remember, walk not late by night. Go not forth into the streets alone. Always have such friends and companions about you as may witness your arrest, and second your appeal to the Princess. For there are such things, sir citizen, as deaths in prison without judgment."

"I shall remember with gratitude, sir," replied the young burgher, "all that you have been pleased to say, and all that you have done in my behalf. But on one point I must needs think you mistake. If I know where I am rightly, we are full sixteen miles from Mierdorp, — a distance which would take four good hours to walk. The castle clock has just struck three, so that it may be broad day, and not merely dawn, before I can reach that place."

"Fear not, fear not," replied the stranger, "you shall have the means of reaching it in time; but follow me quick, for the hours wear." Thus saying, he strode on through the trees and

brushwood, pursuing a path, which, though totally invisible to the eyes of his companion, he seemed to tread with the most perfect certainty. Sometimes the occasional underwood appeared to cover it over entirely; and often the sweeping boughs of the higher trees drooped across it, and dashed the night dew upon the clothes of the travellers, as they pushed through them; but still the Vert Gallant led on. In about ten minutes, the glancing rays of the sinking moon, seen shining through the leaves before them, showed that they were coming to some more open ground; and the next moment they stood upon the principal road which traversed the forest.

By the side of the highway, with an ordinary groom holding the bridle, stood a strong, bony horse; and the only further words that were spoken, were, "The road lies straight before you to the west; mount, and God speed you. Give the horse to the monk when you are in safety."

"A thousand thanks and blessings on your head!" replied the young burgher; and spring-

ing with easy grace into the saddle, he struck the horse with his heel, and darted off towards Mierdorp.

“ A likely cavalier as ever I saw !” exclaimed the Vert Gallant. “ Now, to cover, to cover,” he added, turning to the groom, and once more plunged into the forest.

In the mean while Albert Maurice rode on; and with his personal adventures we shall now be compelled to proceed for some way, leaving the other characters for fate to play with as she lists, till we have an opportunity of resuming their history also.

The horse that bore the young burgher, though not the most showy that ever underwent the saddle, proved strong, swift, and willing; and as it is probably impossible for a man just liberated from prison, with the first sense of recovered freedom fresh upon him, to ride slowly, Albert Maurice dashed on for some way at full speed. His mind had adopted, without a moment's doubt or hesitation, the plan which had been pointed out to him by the leader of the adventurers, as the very best

which, under his present circumstances, he could pursue ; and this conviction, — together with the proofs he had already received that the wishes of the Vert Gallant were friendly and generous towards himself, and the intimate knowledge which his deliverer had displayed of his affairs, — made him resolve to follow implicitly his directions. Although this resolution was brought about by the mental operation of a single moment, it is not to be supposed that the various events which had befallen him, since entering the castle of Hannut, had not produced on his mind all those effects of wonder, surprise, and doubt, which they might naturally be expected to cause in the bosom of any person so circumstanced.

There were a thousand things that he could not in any way account for, and which we shall not attempt to account for either. The interest which his deliverer had taken in his fate ; the means by which he had acquired such an exact knowledge of his situation ; the existence of so large a band of free companions, notwithstand-

ing all the efforts which the Duke of Burgundy had directed against them, were all matters of astonishment. He had felt, however, during his short intercourse with the green riders, that neither the time, the place, nor the circumstances admitted of any enquiry upon the subject ; and with a prompt decision, which was one great trait in his character, while he took advantage of the means of escape offered to him, he had suppressed as far as possible every word which might have betrayed surprise or curiosity. As he rode on, however, he pondered on all that had happened ; and he doubted not, that, now that he was at liberty to seek and collect the proofs of his innocence, he should find little difficulty in clearing himself from any absolute crime, if his cause were submitted to a regular tribunal. Unfortunately, this did not always occur. In most of the continental states the will of the Prince was law ; and too often the same absolute jurisdiction was exercised by his officers. This was especially the case in respect to Maillotin du Bac, who, in one morning, had been known to arrest and hang thirty persons,

without any form of trial or judicial investigation.

Nevertheless, all these circumstances seemed to have been fully considered by the Vert Galant; and the means he had pointed out of an appeal to the Princess Mary, in case of unjust persecution, were, as the young burgher well knew, the only ones that could prove efficacious.

So well had the distance and the horse's speed been calculated, that, at about two miles from Mierdorp, that undefinable grey tint, which can scarcely be called light, but is the first approach towards it, began to spread upwards over the eastern sky; and by the time that Albert Maurice emerged from the forest of Hannut, which then extended to within a mile of the village, the air was all rosy with the dawn of day. Just as he was issuing forth from the woodland, he perceived before him a stout, short, round figure, covered with a long grey gown, the cowl or hood of which was thrown back upon his shoulders, leaving a polished bald head to shine uncovered in the rays of the morning; and the young fugitive paused to

examine the person whom he had by this time nearly overtaken.

The monk, for so he appeared to be, was mounted on a stout, fat mule, whose grey skin, and sleek, rotund limbs, gave him a ridiculous likeness to his rider, which was increased by a sort of vacant sentimentality that appeared in the round face of the monk, and the occasional slow raising and dropping of one of the mule's ears, in a manner which bears no other epithet but that of *lack-a-daisical*.

According to the instructions he had received, the young burgher immediately rode up to the monk, and addressed him with the " Good morrow, Father Barnabas," which he had been directed to employ.

" Good morrow, my son," replied the monk ; " though unhappily for me, sinner that I am, my patron saint is a less distinguished one than him whose name you give me ; I am called Father Charles, not Father Barnabas."

As he thus spoke he looked up in the young traveller's face with an air of flat unmeaningness, which would at once have convinced Albert Maurice that he was mistaken in the

person, had he not discovered a small ray of more intellectual expression beam the next moment through the dull, grey eye of the monk, while something curled, and just curled, the corners of his mouth with what did not deserve the name of a smile, and yet was far too faint for a grin.

“ Well,” said he, eyeing him keenly, “ if your name be not Barnabas, good Father, I will give you good morrow once more, and ride on.”

“ Good morrow, my son,” replied the monk, with the same demure smile ; and Albert Maurice, to be as good as his word, put his horse into a trot, in order to make the best of his way towards Mierdorp, which was lying in the fresh, sweet light of morning, at the distance of about three quarters of a mile before him. To his surprise, however, the monk’s mule, without any apparent effort of its rider, the moment he quickened his horse’s pace, put itself into one of those long, easy ambles for which mules are famous, and without difficulty carried its master on by his side.

“ You are in haste, my son,” said the monk :
“ whither away so fast ? ”

“ I go to seek Father Barnabas,” replied the young burgher, somewhat provoked, but yet half laughing at the quiet merriment of the monk’s countenance as he rode along beside him on his mule, with every limb as round as if he had been formed out of a series of pumpkins.

“ Well, well,” answered the monk, “ perhaps I may aid you in your search ; but what wouldst thou with Father Barnabas, when thou hast found him ? Suppose I were Father Barnabas now, what wouldst thou say to me ? ”

“ I would say nothing,” replied Albert Maurice ; “ but — let us on our way.”

“ So be it, then,” replied the other ; “ but one thing, good brother, it does not become me to go jaunting over the country with profane laymen ; therefore if we are to journey forward together, you must don the frock, and draw the hood over your head, to hide that curly black hair. So turn your horse’s bridle rein before we get into the village, and behind those

old hawthorn bushes, I will see whether my wallet does not contain the wherewithal to make thee as good a monk as myself."

As it now became sufficiently evident to the young citizen that he was not deceived in the person whom he had addressed, he acquiesced in his proposal ; and turning down a little lane to their right hand, they dismounted from their beasts behind a small, thick clump of aged thorns, and the monk soon produced, from a large leather wallet which he carried behind him, a grey gown, exactly similar to his own, which completely covered and concealed the handsome form of the young citizen. The cowl having been drawn entirely over his head, and the frock bound round his middle by a rope, they once more mounted ; and pursuing their way together, soon found means to turn the conversation to the direct object which they had in view, with which it appeared the monk was fully acquainted.

The ice having been once broken, Albert Maurice found his companion a shrewd, intelligent man, with a strong touch of roguish

humour, which, though partly concealed under an affectation of stolidity, had grown into such a habit of jesting, that it seemed scarcely possible to ascertain when he was serious, and when he was not. This, however, might be, in some degree, assumed; for it is wonderful how often deep feelings and deep designs, intense affection, towering ambition, and even egregious cunning itself, attempt to cover themselves over by different shades of playful gaiety, knowing that the profundity of a deep stream is often hidden by the light ripple on its surface.

However that might be, his companion was any thing but wanting in sense, and proved of the greatest assistance to the young citizen of Ghent, by his keen foresight and knowledge of the world.

With his co-operation Albert Maurice, at the little town of Gembloux, at which he had been arrested by Maillotin du Bac, obtained full and sufficient evidence, written down by the magistrate of the place, to prove that the first squabble between himself and the Prévôt had arisen in a wanton aggression committed by one

of the soldiers of the latter ; and that before that officer had opened any of the papers in his possession, he had sworn, with a horrible oath, that for striking his follower, he would hang him over the gates of Ghent. All this was attested in due form ; and satisfied that half the dangers of his situation were gone, Albert Maurice gladly turned his horse's head towards his native place. The monk still accompanied him, saying that he had orders not to leave him till he was safe within the walls of Ghent, — “ seeing that you are such a sweet, innocent lamb,” he added, “ that you are not to be trusted amongst the wolves of this world alone.”

Their journey passed over, however, without either danger or difficulty ; for though at Gembloux Albert Maurice had laid aside the frock, as his very enquiries would of course have made his person known, he had resumed it, by the monk's desire, as soon as they had quitted that town ; and the garb procured them a good reception in all the places at which they paused upon the road.

As they approached Ghent, Father Barnabas thought fit to take new precautions; and requested his young companion to make use of the mule which he had hitherto ridden himself, while he mounted the horse. He also drew his own cowl far over his head; nor were these steps in vain, as they very soon had occasion to experience.

They reached the gates of Ghent towards sunset, on a fine clear evening, and passed through many a group of peasantry, returning from the market in the city, to their rural occupations. On these, the monk showered his benedictions very liberally; but Albert Maurice remarked, that as they approached a small party of soldiers near the gate, his companion assumed an air of military erectness, and caused his horse to prance and curvet like a war steed. Perhaps, had he noticed what the keen eye of the monk had instantly perceived, that two of the soldiers were examining them as they came up with more than ordinary care, he might have guessed that the object of all this parade of horsemanship was to draw attention upon

himself, as a skilful conjuror forces those, to whom he offers the cards, to take the very one he wishes, without their being conscious of his doing so.

“Ventre Saint Gris!” cried one of the soldiers to the other, as they came near. “It must be him! That is no monk, Jenkin!—Pardi! I will see, however. Father, your cowl is awry!” he added, laying his hand upon the monk’s bridle rein, and snatching at his hood as if for the sake of an insolent joke. The cowl instantly fell back under his hand, exposing the fat bald head of the friar; and the soldier, with a broad laugh, retired, disappointed, amongst his companions, suffering the young citizen, who, on the still, quiet mule, had escaped without observation, to proceed with the monk to the dwelling of good Martin Fruse, which they reached without further annoyance or interruption.

CHAPTER XI.

ALTHOUGH the soldiers that Albert Maurice and his companion had passed at the gate, with the usual reckless gaiety of their profession, had been found laughing lightly, and jesting with each other, yet it soon became evident to the eyes of the travellers, as they passed onward through the long irregular streets of the city, that something had occurred to affect the population of Ghent in an unusual manner.

Scarce a soul was seen abroad; and there was a sort of boding calmness in the aspect of the whole place, as they rode on, which taught them to expect important tidings of some kind, from the first friend they should meet. The misty evening sunshine streamed down the far perspective of the streets, casting long and defined shadows from the fountains and the crosses, and the houses, that every here and there obtruded their insolent gables

beyond the regular line of the other buildings ; but no lively groups were seen amusing themselves at the corners, or by the canals ; no sober citizens sitting out before their doors, in all the rich and imposing colours of Flemish costume, to enjoy the cool tranquillity of the evening, after the noise, and the bustle, and the heat of an active summer's day. One or two persons, indeed, might be observed with their heads close together, and the important forefinger laid with all the energy of demonstration in the palm of the other hand, while the party gossiped eagerly over some great event, each one fancying himself fit to lead hosts and to govern kingdoms ; and evcry now and then some rapid figure, with consequence in all its steps, was remarked flitting from house to house, the receptacle and carrier of all the rumours of the day.

Though in one of the last named class of personages whom Albert Maurice met as he advanced, he recognised an acquaintance, yet, for many reasons, he only drew the cowl more completely over his face ; and, secure in the

concealment of the monk's frock that covered him, he rode on, till he reached the dwelling of his uncle, Martin Fruse, which he judged to be a more secure asylum than his own, till such time as his resolutions were taken, and his plans arranged.

The dwelling of the worthy burgher, though occupying no inconsiderable part of one of the principal streets, had its private entrance in a narrower one branching to the south-west; and the tall houses on either hand, acting as complete screens between the portal and the setting sun, gave at least an hour's additional darkness to the hue of evening.

So deep, indeed, was the gloom, and so completely did the friar's gown conceal the person of Albert Maurice, that one of his uncle's oldest servants, who was standing in the entrance, did not in any degree recognise his young master, though it was his frequent boast that he had borne the young citizen—the pink of the youth of Ghent—upon his knee a thousand times when he was no higher than an ell wand. Even the familiar stride with which Albert

Maurice entered the long, dark passage, as soon as he had dismounted from his mule, did not undeceive him ; and he ran forward into the large sitting room, which lay at the end of the vestibule, announcing that two monks, somewhat of the boldest, had just alighted at the door.

He was followed straight into the apartment of Martin Fruse by that worthy citizen's nephew, who immediately found himself in the midst of half a dozen of the richest burghers, enjoying an hour of social converse with their wealthy neighbour before they retired to their early rest. It would seem to belong more to the antiquary than to the historian to describe the appearance of the chamber, or the dress of the personages who were seated on benches around it ; and it may suffice to say, that the furred gowns, and gold chains, which decorated the meeting, sufficiently evinced the municipal dignity of the guests.

At the moment of his nephew's entrance, Martin Fruse was upon his feet, following round a serving boy, who, with a small silver cup,

and flask of the same metal, was distributing to each of the burghers a modicum of a liquor now, alas! too common, but which was then lately invented; and was known — from the many marvellous qualities attributed to it — by the name of *Eau de Vie*.

“Take but one small portion —” said the worthy citizen to one of his companions, who made some difficulty; “not more than a common spoonful. Do not the best leeches in Europe recommend it as a sovereign cure for all diseases, and a preservation against bad air? It warms the stomach, strengthens the bones, clears the head, and promotes all the functions. And, truly, these are sad and troublous times, wherein cordials are necessary, and every man requires such consolation as he can find. Alack, and a well-a-day! who would have thought——”

But the speech of good Martin Fruse was brought to a sudden conclusion by the entrance of his man, announcing the coming of the two monks; which notice was scarcely given, when Albert Maurice himself appeared. Before

entering, the young citizen had paused one moment to cast off the friar's gown, on account of the strange voices he heard as he advanced along the passage, and he now showed himself in his usual travelling dress, though his apparel was somewhat disarranged, and he appeared without cap or bonnet.

"Welcome, welcome, my fair nephew!" cried Martin Fruse, who looked upon Albert with no small pride and deference. "Sirs, here is my nephew Albert, come, at a lucky hour, to give us his good counsel and assistance in the strange and momentous circumstances in which we are placed."

"Welcome, most welcome, good Master Maurice!" cried a number of voices at once. Welcome, most welcome! and the young traveller, instantly surrounded by his fellow-citizens, was eagerly congratulated on his return, which had apparently been delayed longer than they had expected or had wished. At the same time, the often repeated words, "Perilous times — extraordinary circumstances — dangers to the state — anxious expectations," and

a number of similar expressions, showed him that the opinion he had formed, from the appearance of the town as he passed through, was perfectly correct, and that some events of general and deep importance had taken place.

“ I see,” he said, in reply, after having answered their first salutations, — “ I see that something must have occurred with which I am unacquainted. Remember, my good friends, that I have been absent from the city for some weeks ; and, for the last four or five days, I have been in places where I was not likely to hear any public tidings.”

“ What !” cried one, “ have you not heard the news ? — that the Duke has been beaten near the lake of Neufchâtel, and all the forces with which he was besieging Morat, have been killed or taken ? ”

“ How !” exclaimed another, “ have you not heard that the Duke of Lorraine is advancing towards Flanders with all speed ? ”

“ Some say he will be at Ghent in a week,” cried a third.

“ But the worst news of all,” said a fourth,

in a solemn and mysterious tone, "is, that a squire, who arrived at the palace last night, saw the Duke stricken from his horse by a Swiss giant with a two-handed sword; and, according to all accounts, he never rose again."

"Good God! is it possible?" exclaimed Albert Maurice, as all these baleful tidings poured in at once upon his ear, with a rapidity which afforded him scarcely an opportunity of estimating the truth of each as he received it, and left him no other feeling for the time than pain at the ocean of misfortunes which had overwhelmed his country — though he looked upon the Prince, who had immediately suffered, as a despot; and upon the nobles, who in general bore the brunt of battle or defeat, as a number of petty tyrants more insupportable than one great one. — "Good God! is it possible?" he exclaimed: "but are you sure, my friends," he continued, after a moment's pause, "that all this news is true? Rumour is apt to exaggerate, and increases evil tidings tenfold, where she only doubles good news. Are these reports quite sure?"

“ Oh ! they are beyond all doubt ; ” replied one of the merchants, with a slight curl of the lip. “ The Lord of Imbercourt, who was on his march to join the army, when he received couriers bearing these evil tidings, returned with his spears in all haste to Ghent to guard against any disturbance, as he said, and to keep the rebellious commons under the rule of law.”

The man who spoke this was a small, dark, insignificant looking person, whose figure would not have attracted a moment's attention, and whose face might have equally passed without notice, had not the keen sparkling light of two clear black eyes, which seemed to wander constantly about in search of other people's thoughts, given at least some warning that there was a subtle, active, and intriguing soul concealed within that diminutive and unprepossessing form. His name was Ganay : by profession he was a druggist ; and the chief, in that city, of a trade, which differed considerably from that of druggist in the present day, and which was one of no small importance in a great manufacturing town like Ghent,

where all the different fabrics required, more or less, some of those ingredients which he imported from foreign countries. In pronouncing the last words, "to keep the rebellious commons under the rule of law," the druggist fixed his keen black eyes upon the face of Albert Maurice with an expression of enquiring eagerness, partly proceeding from an anxious desire to see into the heart of the young citizen, whose character the other fully estimated, partly from a design to lead him — by showing him what was expected from him — to say something which might discover his views and feelings.

He was deceived, however: the very certainty that his words were to be marked put the young citizen upon his guard; and, conscious that there were mighty events gathering round; — that his own situation was precarious, — and that of his country still more so, — he felt the necessity of obtaining perfect certainty with regard to the facts, and of indulging deep reflection in regard to the consequences, before he committed himself in the irretrievable man-

ner which is sometimes effected by a single word.

“ Ha ! ” he exclaimed ; “ ha ! did he say so ? ” — and he was about to drop the dangerous part of the subject, by some common observation, when another of the burghers changed the immediate topic of conversation.

“ But there is more news still, good Master Albert Maurice,” exclaimed a little fat merchant, whose face expressed all that extravagant desire of wondering, and of exciting wonder, which goes greatly to form the character of a newsmonger ; — “ but there is more news still, which you will be delighted to hear, as a good citizen, and a friend to honest men. That pitiful, prying, blood-thirsty tyrant, Maillotin du Bac, was brought into the town to-day in a litter, beaten so sorely, that they say there is not a piece of his skin so big as a Florence crown that is not both black and blue. Faith, I wonder that the honest men of the wood did not hang him to one of their own trees.”

“ Ha ! ” again exclaimed Albert Maurice, but in a tone far more raised with surprise than

before, "how did he meet with such a mishap? He boasted that he would not leave a *routier*, or a free companion in the land."

A low chuckle just behind him, as he pronounced these words, recalled suddenly to his memory, that he had been followed into the room by the monk called Father Barnabas; and, congratulating himself that he had suffered not a syllable to escape his lips that might commit him in any degree, he turned towards the companion of his journey, who, in the haste and confusion with which all these tidings had been poured forth upon him, had been forgotten by himself and overlooked by the others.

A few sentences in explanation of his appearance, and in general reference to great services received from him on the road, instantly called upon Father Barnabas the good-humoured civilities and attention of Martin Fruse, and might have turned the conversation to other matters, had not the monk himself seemed determined to hear more of the drubbing which had been bestowed upon Maillotin du Bac.

“ Verily, poor gentleman,” he exclaimed, in a tone in which the merriment so far predominated over the commiseration, as to render it much more like the voice of malice than of pity ; — “ verily, poor gentleman, he must be in a sad case. How met he with such a terrible accident ? ”

“ Why, Father, you shall hear,” replied the newsmonger, eager to disburden his wallet of information upon a new ear ; “ what I am going to tell you is quite true, I can assure you, for my maid Margaret’s sister, is going to be married to one of the soldiers of the Prévôt’s band. It seems that they had searched the forest of Hannut all day in vain, for a body of the green riders who had taken refuge there, and also for a prisoner who had made his escape ; and towards night they were making for Hal, because they would not go back to Hannut, as the Prévôt had some quarrel with the Chatelain, when suddenly, in the little wood, near Braine-la-Leud, they were met by a party of fifty free companions, who drew up right across their way. The Captain, who,

they say, was the famous Vert Gallant of Haannut himself, singled out the Prévôt, and at the very first charge of the two bands brought him to the ground with his lance. Du Bac, however, was not hurt, and at first refused to yield; but the Vert Gallant cudgelled him with the staff of his lance, till there was not a piece of his armour would hold together. He would not kill him, it seems; and when the whole of the band were dispersed, which they were in five minutes, with the exception of five or six who were taken prisoners, the Vert Gallant struck off the Prévôt's spurs with his axe, and, telling him that he was a false traitor, and no true knight, sent him back to Ghent, with all the others who had been taken."

While the burgher was detailing these particulars, the small grey roguish eyes of the monk stole from time to time a glance at the face of Albert Maurice with an expression of merriment, triumph, and malice, all mingled intimately together, but subdued into a look of quiet fun, which elicited a smile from the lip of the young citizen, though the tale he had just

heard furnished him with matter for more serious reflection. The eyes of the druggist also fixed upon him, while the story of the Prévôt's discomfiture was told by their companion; and the smile which he saw play upon the face of the young burgher seemed to furnish him with information of what was passing in the mind within, sufficient at least for his own purposes; for from that moment he appeared to pay little farther attention to the subject before them, otherwise than by mingling casually in the conversation that succeeded.

That conversation became soon of a rambling and desultory nature, wandering round the great political events of the day, the fate of their country, the state of the city itself, and the future prospects of the land, without, however, approaching so near to the dangerous matter which was probably in the heart of every one, as to call forth words that could not be retracted. In fact, each person present felt burdened by great but ill arranged thoughts; and those who saw most deeply into the abyss before them, were the least inclined to ven-

ture their opinions ere they heard those of others.

With that sort of intuitive perception which some men have of what is passing in the breasts of those around them, Albert Maurice, without the slightest exertion of cunning or shrewdness, — without one effort to draw forth the thoughts of those by whom he was surrounded, — comprehended clearly the peculiar modifications under which each one present was revolving in his own mind what advantages might be derived from — what opportunities might be afforded by — the discomfiture and death of Charles the Bold, for recovering those immunities and privileges which that prince had wrung from Ghent, after they had been too often abused by her citizens. His first thought had been of the same nature also : but the mention of Maillotin du Bac had suddenly recalled to his mind his own particular circumstances and situation ; and it must be confessed, that, for a few minutes, it was entirely directed to the consideration of how greatly his own personal safety might be ensured by the events, the news of which had reached Ghent during his absence.

The moment after, however, he upbraided himself for his selfishness; and, casting all individual considerations away, he determined to bend the whole energies of his mind to reap, from the circumstances of the times, the greatest possible degree of benefit for his native city. As he pondered over it, the old aspirations of his soul revived. Not only Ghent, he thought, might be benefited, not only Ghent might be freed, but the whole of Flanders might acquire a degree of liberty she had never known. Still, as he reflected, the image thus presented to his mind increased, and, like the cloud of smoke in the eastern fable, which, rolling forth from the mouth of the small vase, gradually condensed into the form of an enormous giant, the thoughts which at first had referred alone to his personal safety enlarged in object, and grew defined in purpose.

The whole continent at that time groaned under the oppression of the feudal system, decayed, corrupted, and abused; and as Albert Maurice mused, he fancied that the freedom of Ghent and Flanders once established, might

afford an example to France, to Europe, to the world. The trampled serf, the enchained bondsman, the oppressed citizen, might throw off the weary yoke under which they had laboured for ages : the rights of every human being might become generally recognised over the whole surface of the globe ; and broken chains and acclamations of joy, the song of freedom and the shout of triumph, presented themselves in hurried visions to his imagination, while patriotism still represented a liberated world hailing his native land as the champion of the liberty of earth.

Such thoughts, rendered him silent and abstracted ; and as every one else felt a degree of painful restraint, after lingering some time, the various guests of Martin Fruse rose to return to their dwellings. Although it was now night, several of them, before they set foot within their own homes, called upon different neighbours in their way, just to tell them, as they said, that Master Albert Maurice was returned to Ghent. None knew why ; but yet this information seemed a piece

of important news to all. By the sway which great natural genius and energy insensibly acquire over the minds of men, Albert Maurice, without ever attempting to force himself into prominent situations, without effort or exertions of any kind, had taught the whole people of the city of Ghent to look to him for extraordinary events; and thus each man who heard of his return, generally stole forth to tell it to his next door neighbour, who again told it to a third. The gossip and the newsmonger gave it forth liberally to others like themselves; so that by a very early hour the next morning the return of Albert Maurice, with a variety of falsehoods and absurdities grafted thereon by the imaginations of the retailers, was generally known not only to those who were personally acquainted with him, but to a number of others who had never seen him in their lives.

CHAPTER XII.

THE appetite for news is like the appetite for every other thing, stimulated by a small portion of food; and the various unsatisfactory reports which had reached Ghent during the day made her good citizens devour the tidings of Albert Maurice's return with no small greediness.

In the meanwhile, the young merchant communicated to his uncle, immediately after the departure of the guests, that, from various circumstances, of which he would afterwards inform him, he judged it not expedient to return to his own house for the time being. He prayed him, therefore, to allow him to occupy, for a short space, the apartments which had been appropriated to him during his youth, in the dwelling where he then was; to which request — as his nephew had originally taken up a separate establishment much against his

wishes — Martin Fruse consented with no small joy, and proposed that the monk, who still remained, should sleep in the little grey chamber over the warehouse.

“Nay, nay,” replied Father Barnabas, when he heard the proposal, — “nay, nay, dearly beloved brother Martin, no grey chamber for me; by my faith I must be betaking myself early to-morrow to my own green chamber, and, in the mean time, I shall pass the night with a friend of mine in the city, in pious exercises and devout exclamations.”

Whether these pious exercises and devout exclamations might not very likely be the rapid circulation of the flagon, and many a jovial bacchanalian song, there may be some reason to doubt. At all events, Albert Maurice had a vague suspicion that it was so; and after pressing the monk to stay, as much as hospitality required, he ceased his opposition to his departure, at the same time putting a purse of twenty golden crowns into his hand.

The monk gazed for a moment upon the little leathern bag, whose weight, as it sunk into his

palm, seemed to convey to him a full idea of its value; and then raising his merry grey eyes to the face of his travelling companion, he replied, "This is great nonsense, my son, quite unnecessary, I assure you; and indeed I cannot accept it, except upon one condition."

"What is that, my good father?" demanded the young burgher, supposing that the monk was about to affect some notable piece of disinterestedness.

"Merely that you will promise me, my son," replied Father Barnabas, "that in case you should ever hereafter meet with a certain friend of ours, whom some people call the Vert Gallant of Hannut, you will be as silent as the dead about ever having given a leathern purse to poor Father Barnabas, as he may well ask, what is the use of a purse to a holy brother, who vows never to have any money to put into it. Do you understand me, my son?"

"Perfectly, perfectly," replied Albert Maurice, "and promise you with all my heart never to mention it."

"So be it then," rejoined the monk, "and

benedicite; — I shall take the horse and the mule out of the stable, and speed upon my way.”

As soon as the monk was gone, Albert Maurice explained to his uncle, as briefly as possible, all that had occurred to him during his absence from Ghent; and the distress, agitation, and terror of the worthy burgher, at every stage of his nephew's story, were beyond all description. “Alack, and a well-a-day! my poor boy,” he cried; — “alack, and a well-a-day! I thought what all these travellings would come to, sooner or later. Good Lord! Good Lord! why should men travel at all! In my young days I never set my foot three leagues out of Ghent; and the first time I ever was seduced to do so, I was caught by robbers in that cursed wood of Hannut, and was obliged to sleep a whole night upon the cold damp ground.”

The young citizen calmed his uncle's agitation as much as possible, and then proceeded to consult with him as to the best means they could adopt, in case that Maillotin du Bac should recover from the drubbing he had received, and pursue, as he doubtless would, his purpose

against Albert Maurice. In some things, Martin Fruse was not deficient in shrewdness; and he instantly saw the advantages that would be gained by a personal application to the Princess, if his nephew were again arrested.

“ If,” said he, “ we had still had our old laws, I should have said at once, appeal to the Eschevins, because, as we used to elect them ourselves, we should have had justice at least, if not favour. But now that the twenty-six, from the *Grand Bailli* down to the last secretary, are all named by the creatures of the Duke, this Maillotin du Bac gets them to warrant every thing he does, while the Princess, who is kind and generous, will be sure to judge in your favour, especially when she sees the papers that prove you were first arrested for taking part with a woman; and her council, who have nothing to do with the Prévôt, will take care not to thwart her who will one day be their mistress.”

It was consequently determined, after some farther discussion, to follow the line of conduct suggested by the leader of the adventurers.

Such precautions as were necessary to ensure against any of those secret proceedings, which sometimes made clean conveyance with an obnoxious person, before any of his friends were aware, were then concerted between Albert Maurice and his uncle ; and the young citizen, pleading fatigue, retired to the apartments that he had occupied as a boy.

There was something in the aspect of the chamber, — the quaint old tapestry, with the eyes of many of the figures shot through by the arrows which he used to direct against them, in the wanton sport of childhood, — the table notched with the boy's unceasing knife, — the well-remembered bed, in which had been dreamed many of the pleasant dreams of early years ; — there was something in the aspect of the whole that called up the peaceful past, and contrasted itself almost painfully with the present. Setting down the lamp which he bore in his hand, Albert Maurice cast himself on a seat, and gazing round the apartment, while the thousand memories of every well known object spoke to his heart with the sweet murmuring

voice of the past; and while all the perils and anxieties of his actual situation,— the imminent danger from which he had just escaped,— the menacing fate which still hung over his head,— and the fierce struggle in which he was likely to be engaged,— pressed for present attention, he could not help exclaiming, “ Oh, boyhood! happy, happy boyhood! must thou never, never come again?”

The busy and usurping present, however, soon took full possession of his thoughts; and, casting from him all cares for the individual danger which threatened himself, he applied his whole mind to consider the probable fate of his country. If the Duke of Burgundy were really dead, he saw, and had long foreseen, that great and extraordinary changes must take place. He knew that there was hardly a town throughout all Flanders, Holland, or Hainault, which was not ready to rise in arms, to recover some privilege wrested from its inhabitants,— to break some chain with which they had all been enthralled. He felt, too, and it was a proud consciousness, that he, and he alone

throughout the whole land, was capable of wielding that mighty engine, a roused up multitude, for the great purpose to which it can only be properly applied, — the benefit and the happiness of the whole. This consciousness arose from two circumstances,—a thorough and intimate acquaintance with the general characters of the principal leading men in the various towns of Flanders, together with a knowledge that each was individually selfish or weak, full of wild and unfeasible schemes, or absorbed in narrow personal desires ; and, in the second place, from the internal perception of immense powers of mind, strengthened and supported by great corporeal vigour and activity.

Such qualities were not, indeed, all that was required to carry mighty schemes to a successful result, especially where they were to be founded on the consent and support of the vain and wilful multitude. But Albert Maurice had, on several occasions, tried his powers of persuading the crowd, and his ready eloquence had never failed to lead, to convince, to command. Indeed, till the present moment, he had felt

almost fearful — surrounded, as he knew himself to be, by watchful and jealous eyes — of the immense popular power that he was aware he could exert. But now, as he paused and considered the probable events about to take place, he felt a triumphant security in his own talents, and prepared to step forward, and secure a popular form of government, for Ghent at least, if the reins had really fallen from the hand that lately held them. His first thoughts, indeed, were all turned towards the benefit of his native country, to the immense advantages that might be obtained for her, and to that mighty thing, liberty, which was scarcely then known to the world. But it was not in human nature, that some breathing of personal ambition should not mingle with his nobler aspirations ; and for a moment he dreamt of power, and rule, and sovereign sway, and of nobles trampled beneath his feet, and of kings bending to court his alliance.

It was but for a moment, however ; and when suddenly the better spirit woke him from his dream, and showed him whither he was wan-

dering, he hid his face in his hands, with a mixed feeling of shame for having suffered himself to be betrayed into such thoughts, and an apprehension lest, in some after-part of his career, when the golden temptation was within his grasp, he should yield to the spirit that even thus early had assailed him, and be in act what he had already been in thought. The very idea of becoming so, made him pause in his resolves, uncertain whether to take any part, lest he should ultimately take an evil one ; and for a moment Albert Maurice, who feared no mortal man, hesitated in fear of himself.

Reflection, however, soon removed his doubts: he knew his intentions to be pure; and, calling before his mind the brightest examples of past ages, he determined to hold them up to himself as models to imitate, and to sacrifice every thing to virtue. Even the very doubts that he had entertained of himself made him choose his examples from the sternest school of patriotism. He felt, perhaps, that any modern efforts must fall below the standard of that antique firmness, which, nurtured by

the long habit of freedom, was with the Romans of the republic a passion as much as a principle; and, fixing his eyes upon the earlier Brutus, he resolved that if ever in after-life the temptation to wrong his country should assail him, he would use that talismanic memory to charm the evil demon away for ever.

While he thus paused and thought, the night wore on; all sounds died away in the streets of Ghent: the footsteps in his uncle's house ceased; and, after the midnight watch had gone by in its round, not a sound for some time disturbed the silence of the place. At length, about one o'clock in the morning, he heard a step ascending the stairs which led to his apartment, and the moment after a tap upon the door announced that some one demanded admittance. He instantly rose, threw back the tapestry, and opened the door, when, to his surprise, he beheld the small keen features and sharp black eyes of the druggist Ganay, beside the face of one of his uncle's servants.

The sight, indeed, accorded very well with his thoughts and wishes; for though the person

who thus visited him was, in character and mind, as distinct, perhaps, I should say, as opposite, to himself as possible, yet he was one of those men who, in moments of general excitement, are often serviceable in the highest degree, and must be used for good, lest they should employ their talents for evil.

The little druggist had, in all his motions, a silent rapidity, a quick, sharp, but stealthy sort of activity, which, to those close observers of the human race, who pretend to read in the habitual movements and peculiar customs of the body the character of the mind within, might have spoken of dark and cunning designs, prompted by strong but carefully hidden passions, with little scruple as to the means of accomplishing schemes once undertaken. Before Albert Maurice was well aware of his presence, he was in the room beside him; and in a few brief words, spoken in a low but remarkably distinct voice, had explained to the young citizen that when he went away about two hours before, he had requested the servant to wait and let him in, after the rest of the

family had gone to rest; and, adding that he had business of much importance to speak upon, he at once explained and apologised for his intrusion.

Albert Maurice took his excuses in good part; and, bidding the servant retire to rest, he closed the door and seated himself with his visiter, well aware that he had to encounter a mind as keen and penetrating, though far less powerful, than his own, on subjects difficult and dangerous to discuss.

“ Master Albert Maurice,” said Ganay, when they were alone, and the retreating step of the servant had announced to his cautious ear that his words were not likely to be overheard, “ it were in vain for you or I to attempt to conceal from each other, or from ourselves, that the moment is come when great and extraordinary events must take place in our native land, or opportunities be lost which may never return again. To you, then, I come,” he added, speaking with a serious earnestness, which was intended to give the appearance of sincere conviction to the flattery he was about to admi-

nister — flattery which, as he knew it to be based in truth, he calculated upon being readily received, and producing a particular purpose of his own, — “ to you, then, I come, Master Albert Maurice, as to the man calculated, by nature and by circumstances, to take the most prominent part in the actions in which we are about to be engaged, — to whom the eyes of all the citizens are naturally turned, and on whom the welfare of our country must, in a great measure, depend. My object is, in no degree, to pry into your confidence, to obtrude advice upon you, or to hurry you forward faster than you may think it necessary to proceed, but simply for the purpose of offering you any assistance in my small power to give, and of pointing out to you the necessity of thought and consultation in regard to the measures to be pursued.”

The young citizen paused for a moment or two in thought ere he replied. “ My good friend,” he answered at length, “ much consideration is, indeed, as you say, necessary. In the first place, we are by no means certain that

our noble Lord the Duke is dead. If he be living it will be our duty, as good subjects and good citizens, to give him all the aid in our power to repel his enemies and to recover his losses."

The druggist bit his lip, and Albert Maurice continued: — "If, indeed, he unhappily have fallen in this rash attempt against the Swiss, say what would you have us do?"

"Nay, nay, speak you," replied the druggist; "for well do we all feel that it is you must lead, and we must follow."

"I see but one thing that can be done," replied the young citizen, — "humbly to tender our allegiance and our services to the heiress of the Burgundian coronet, and to petition her to confirm to us our liberties and privileges."

He spoke slowly and calmly, in a tone of voice from which nothing could be gathered in addition to the words he uttered; and in vain did the small dark eyes of his fellow-citizen scan his countenance to discover something more. His face remained completely unmoved, if it was not by a scarcely perceptible smile at

the evident anxiety and agitation with which his calmness and indifference affected his companion.

“ Good God !” cried the druggist, starting up in the first impatience of disappointed expectation,—“ Good God ! little did I expect to hear such words from your lips!—But no !” he added, after a moment’s pause of deep thought, during which he rapidly combined every remembered trait in the character of Albert Maurice, with his present affected calmness, and deduced from it a true conclusion in regard to his real motives. “ But no ! Young man, I have marked you from your childhood. I know you as well as my own son, nay, better ; — for his light follies have made him an alien to my house, though not to my heart — I have seen your character develope itself — I have seen the wild spirit and petulance of boyhood become, when brought under the sway of maturer reason, that overwhelming enthusiasm, which, like a mighty river, is calm only because it is deep and powerful. Albert Maurice, you cannot deceive *me* ; and let me tell you, that

even were the course, which but now you proposed to pursue, that to which your feelings and your reason really led you, the people of this country would leave you to truckle to power alone ; and, though — wanting one great directing mind to curb their passions, and point their endeavours to a just conclusion — they might cast one half of Europe into anarchy, and rush upon their own destruction. Most assuredly they would do so, rather than submit again to a new despot, or place their lives and their happiness in the power of one who owns no law, no justice but his own will.”

“ Think you they would do so, indeed ? ” demanded the young citizen, well aware of the fact, but somewhat doubtful still of the entire purity of his companion’s motives. — “ Think you they would do so, indeed ? Then, my good friend, we must, as you say, for the safety and security of all, find some one who may lead them to better things : but to succeed we must be cautious — we must trust no man before we try him ; and we must first make sure of those who lead, before we rouse up those who are to

be led. Ere one step is taken, however, we must ensure the ground that we stand upon, and know what has been the real event of this great battle. Nay, nay, protest not that it is as we have heard. Rumour, the universal liar, sometimes will give us portions of the truth, beyond all doubt, but never yet, believe me, did she tell a tale that was not more than one half falsehood. But even granting that the chief point be true, at the very threshold of our enterprise, we must learn each particular shade of thought and of opinion, possessed by our great and leading citizens. Nor must Ghent stand alone; each other city throughout all Flanders must be prepared to acknowledge and support the deeds of Ghent."

"You seem to have considered the matter deeply," said the druggist, with a smile; "but I fear such long preparations, and the time necessary to excite the public mind ——"

"Fear not," interrupted Albert Maurice; "fear not. You little know the commons, if you suppose that time is necessary to call them into action. A few shrewd words, false or true,

it matters not, will set the whole country in a flame as fast as news can fly. Give me but a good occasion, and an opportunity of speech, and in one half hour all Ghent shall be in arms."

"It may be so," replied the druggist, thoughtfully; "I doubt it not — indeed I know it is so; but, methinks, my dear young friend, that while we are proceeding with such slow circumspection, our enemies may take their measures of precaution also; and as they have the present power, may use and extend it to such good effect that all our efforts will be fruitless. Already the Lord of Imbercourt has returned with a hundred and fifty lances; the number of nobles in the town, with their retainers, will furnish near five hundred more."

"Again, fear not," replied Albert Maurice: "the popular mind is as a magazine of that black hellish compound, which gives roar and lightning to the cannon; one single spark, applied by a fearless hand, will make it all explode at once. The nobles stand upon a mine; and there are those in Ghent who will not fear to

spring it beneath their feet should there be need, which Heaven avert. One thing, however, must be done, and that with speed. As an united body, these feudal tyrants are powerful, — too much so, indeed, — but amongst them there must be surely more than sufficient stores of vanity, wrath, hatred, revenge, and of all those other manifold weaknesses, which we may employ to detach some of their members from their own body, and to spread division amongst them. — Is there no one could be won ?”

“ None that I know of,” replied the druggist, “ except, indeed, it were my very good Lord and kind patron” — he spoke with a sneer — “ Thibault of Neufchâtel, who affects mighty popularity, bows his grey head to the people as low as to his saddle-bow — calls them the good commons — the worthy citizens of Ghent ; and, no longer gone than yesterday, made me, Walter Ganay, the poor burgher druggist, sit down at his lordly table, and drink of his spiced wine. But I fear me, my dear young friend, though the worthy Lord may affect wonderful popularity, and others of his rank might be brought

to do the same, they would never stand by us in the moment of need: the interests of their class would soon resume its place in their thoughts, and they would quit the citizens whenever the citizens wanted their help."

"That matters little," replied Albert Maurice, laying his hand upon the arm of his companion. "The aid that we might derive from the swords of half a dozen nobles were but dust in the balance; but the advantages that we may derive from their seeming to be with us in the outset are great and incalculable. That which has overthrown the finest armies that were ever yet brought into the field;—that which has scattered to the wind the noblest associations that ever were framed for the benefit of mankind;—that which has destroyed leagues, and broken alliances, crushed republics under the feet of despots, and blasted the best formed and brightest designs of human beings, doubt and suspicion of each other;—that, that great marrer of all men's combinations, must be listed on our side against our oppressors. We must teach them to fear and to suspect each other;

and the bonds that hold them together will be broken, and may remain severed till it is too late to unite them again. This Thibalt of Neufchâtel," he added hastily, "I have heard of him, and seen him often. When I was a mere boy, I remember riding under his escort from the forest of Hannut, and as haughty a lord he was as e'er I met with; but now, it would seem, he has changed his tone, and is the popular, the pleasant noble, the friend of the commons; — he is somewhat in his dotage too, just at that point where weakness affects great wisdom. He must be won, by all means, if it be but for a day. Is there no way, think you, by which he may be brought to show himself amongst us at some popular meeting. A thousand to one the very fact of his having done so, and the scorn that it will call upon him from his fellow-nobles, by committing his vanity on our side, will bind him to us for ever; and he will calmly look upon the fall of his order, if it were but for the purpose of saying to each ruined baron, 'If you had done as I have, you would have been safe.' — At all events," he added, "his pre-

sence with us would sow the first seed of disunion among the proud nobility: — can no means be found?”

“ Oh, many, many, doubtless,” replied the druggist; “ but great reverence and respect must be shown to him, and all ultimate views must be concealed.”

“ Of course,” answered Albert Maurice, “ of course,” and resting his brow upon his hands, he paused thoughtfully for several minutes. “ Mark me, good Master Ganay,” he said, at length, — “ mark me, and remember that you have sought me in this business, not I you. Think not, therefore, that in giving you directions what to do, I wish to arrogate to myself any superior power, or wisdom, or knowledge. Deeply and fervently do I wish to serve my country. As far as I see my way clearly, and as far as my countrymen choose to trust me, willingly will I take a lead in their affairs. The moment my own view or their confidence fails, I will draw back and leave the staff in better hands. Let your first step, then, be — at an early hour to-morrow — to prompt

as many of the principal citizens as you can meet with, to assemble in the town-hall upon various pretences. Speak to one about changes in the price of grain, and send him thither to hear more. Tell another that the English wools have failed, and let him come for news from across the seas. Bid another to the town-hall for tidings from France; and a fourth for the news from Switzerland. I, too, will be there; and if you can so arrange it as to bring Thibalt of Neufchâtel to the same place by half-past ten of the clock, I will have all prepared to fix him ours, if possible."

"I will undertake it," replied the druggist. "Albert Maurice, we understand each other, though little has been said, — and perhaps wisely; — yet we understand each other, and shall do so, without farther explanations; I give you good night."

"Farewell," said Albert Maurice, as the other rose to depart; "but remember, above all things, no word to any one of this night's meeting; for, if we would work well together

for the benefit of all, we must not be seen together too much. Again, farewell."

Thus saying, he raised the light; and, after guiding his visiter through some of the long and tortuous passages of his uncle's dwelling, he saw him depart, and closed the door for the night.

CHAPTER XIII.

ONCE more within the solitude of his own chamber, Albert Maurice paused, while a degree of emotion not to be mastered, passed over him, as he felt that he had taken the first step in a career which must speedily bring power, and honour, and immortal glory— or the grave. As I have before said, in all the mutinous revolts of the citizens of Ghent, he had recoiled from any participation in their struggles, both with a degree of contempt for such petty broils as they usually were, and with an involuntary feeling of awe, as if he knew that whenever he did take a part in the strife, it was destined to become more deadly and more general than it had ever been before. There was nothing, indeed, of personal apprehension in his sensations. They consisted alone of a deep, overpowering feeling of the mighty, tremendous importance of the events likely to

ensue, of the awful responsibility incurred, of the fearful account to be given by him, who takes upon himself the dangerous task of rousing up a nation, and attempts to raise and rule the whirlwind passions of a fierce and excited people.

He had now, however, taken the first step; and he felt that that first step was irretrievable, that his bark was launched upon the stormy ocean of political intrigue, that he had left the calm shore of private station never to behold it again; and that nothing remained for him, but to sail out the voyage he had undertaken, amidst all the tempests and the hurricanes that might attend his course. It could scarcely be called a weakness to yield one short unseen moment to emotion under such a feeling; to look back with lingering regret upon the calm days behind; and to strive with anxious thought to snatch some part of the mighty secrets of the future from beyond the dark, mysterious veil which God, in his great mercy, has cast over the gloomy sanctuary of fate. It was but for a moment that he thus yielded; and then, with a power which some men

of vast minds possess, he cast from him the load of thought, prepared, when the moment of action came, to act decisively ; and feeling that his corporeal frame required repose, he stretched himself upon his bed, and slept without a dream — a sleep as deep, as still, as calm, as we may suppose to have visited the tent of Cæsar, when, conscious of coming empire, he had passed the Rubicon.

It lasted not long, however ; and the first rays of the morning sun, as they found their way through the narrow lattice of his chamber, woke him with energies refreshed, and with a mind prepared for whatever fortunes the day might bring.

A few hours past in writing, and a short explanation with his uncle in regard to the exigencies of the approaching moment, consumed the time between the young burgher's rising and the hour appointed for the meeting in the town-hall ; and, accompanied by worthy Martin Fruse, whom he well knew that he could rule as he liked, Albert Maurice proceeded into the streets of Ghent.

In deference to his uncle's dislike to the elevation of a horse's back, the young citizen took his way on foot, followed, as well as preceded, by two serving men, to which the station of Martin Fruse, as syndic of the cloth-workers, gave him a right, without the imputation of ostentation. It was not, indeed, the custom of either of the two citizens to show themselves in the streets of their own town thus accompanied, except upon occasions of municipal state; but, in the present instance, both were aware that, if the news of the preceding day were true, sudden aid from persons on whom they could rely, either as combatants or messengers, might be required.

It was a market-day in the city of Ghent; and as they walked on, many a peasant, laden with rural merchandise, was passed by them in the streets, and many a group of gossiping men and women, blocking up the passage of the narrow ways, was disturbed by the important zeal of the serving men making way for the two high citizens whom they preceded. The streets, indeed, were all flutter and gaiety; but

the market-place itself offered a still more lively scene, being filled to overflowing with the population of the town and the neighbouring districts, in all the gay and glittering colours of their holiday costume.

Although the market had already begun, the principal traffic which seemed to be carrying on was that in news ; and the buzz of many voices, all speaking together, announced how many were eager to tell as well as to hear. No sooner had the two citizens entered that flat, open square, which every one knows as the chief market-place of old Ghent, than the tall, graceful figure of the younger burgher caught the eyes of the people around ; and in answer to a question from some one near, an artisan, who had come thither either to buy or sell, replied, " It is Master Albert Maurice, the great merchant, just returned, they say, from Namur."

The words were immediately taken up by another near ; and the announcement of the popular citizen's presence ran like lightning through the crowd. A whispering hum, and a movement of all the people, as he advanced, some

to make way, and some to catch a sight of him, was all that took place at first. But soon his name was given out louder and more loud as it passed from mouth to mouth; and at length some one in the middle of the market-place threw up his cap into the air, and in a moment the whole place echoed with "Long live Albert Maurice, the good friend of the people of Ghent!"

Doffing his bonnet, the young citizen advanced upon his way towards the town-hall, bowing on every side to the populace, with that bland yet somewhat stately smile upon his fine arching lip, which wins so much love without losing a tittle of respect; and still the people as he went cheered him with many voices, while every now and then some individuals would salute him in various modes, according to their rank and situation.

"Give thee good day, Master Albert Maurice!" cried one who claimed some acquaintance with him. — "God bless thee for a noble citizen!" exclaimed another. — "Long life to Albert Maurice!" shouted a third. — "What

news from Namur?" demanded a fourth. — "Speak to us, noble sir!" again exclaimed another: "speak to us! speak to us! as you one day did on the bridge!"

Such cries were multiplying; and popular excitement, which is very easily changed into popular tumult, was proceeding to a higher point than Albert Maurice wished, especially as amongst the crowd he observed several soldiers. These, though a word would have rendered them the objects of the people's fury, were much more likely to become the reporters of the public feeling to the government, before the preparations which he contemplated were mature; and he was accordingly hurrying his pace to avoid disturbance, when suddenly the sound of trumpets from the opposite side of the square diverted the attention of all parties.

The young citizen turned his eyes thitherward with the rest, and made his way forward in that direction, as soon as he perceived a dense but small body of armed horsemen debouching from the street that led from the palace, with trumpets sounding before them,

and raised lances, as if their errand were as peaceful as their garb was warlike.

Apprehensive that something might occur which would require that rapid decision and presence of mind which rule, in many cases, even the great ruler.— circumstance, he hurried on, while the people made way for him to pass; probably from a tacit conviction that he alone of all the assemblage was qualified to deal with great events. As he approached, the body of horsemen reached the little fountain in the middle of the market-place, and he caught the flutter of female habiliments in the midst of the guard.

At that moment the squadron opened, and, clearing a small space around, displayed a brilliant group in the centre, on which all eyes were instantly turned. A number of the personages of which it was composed were well known, at least by sight, to the young burgher; and from their presence he easily divined the names and characters of the rest. Mounted on a splendid black charger, there appeared, amongst others, the Lord of Ravestein, first cousin of

the Duke of Burgundy, together with the Duke of Clèves and the Lord of Imbercourt. The faces of these noblemen, as well as that of Margaret of York, Duchess of Burgundy, Albert Maurice knew full well; but in the midst of all was a countenance he had never beheld before. It was that of a fair, beautiful girl, of about twenty years of age, whose sweet hazel eyes, filled with mild and pensive light, and curtained by long dark lashes, expressed — if ever eyes were the mind's heralds — a heart, a soul, subdued by its own powers; full of deep feelings, calmed, but not lessened, by its own command over itself. All the other features were in harmony with those eyes, beautiful in themselves, but still more beautiful by the expression which they combined to produce; and the form, also, to which they belonged, instinct with grace and beauty, seemed framed by nature in her happiest mood to correspond with that fair face.

Albert Maurice needed not to be told that there, was Mary of Burgundy. He gazed on her without surprise; for he had ever heard that she

was most beautiful ; but, as he gazed, by an instinctive reverence for the loveliness he saw, he took his bonnet from his head, and, all the crowd following his example, stood bareheaded before her, while a short proclamation was read twice by a herald.

“ Mary of Burgundy,” it ran, “ Governness of Flanders on behalf of her father, Charles Duke of Burgundy, to her dearly beloved citizens of Ghent. It having been industriously circulated by some persons, enemies to the state, that the high and mighty Prince our father Charles as aforesaid, Duke of Burgundy and Count of Flanders, Artois, and Hainault, had been slain in Switzerland, which God forefend ! and knowing both the zeal and love of the good citizens of Ghent towards our father, and how much pain such evil tidings would occasion them, we hasten to assure them that such a rumour is entirely false and malicious ; and that the Duke our father is well in health and stout in the field, as is vouched by letters received last night by special couriers from his

camp; and God and St. Andrew hold him well
for ever!

“MARY.”

A loud cheer rose from all the people, while, bending her graceful head, and smiling sweetly on the crowd, the heiress of Burgundy acknowledged the shout, as if it had been given in sincere congratulation on her father's safety. The princess and her attendants then rode on, to witness the same proclamation in another place; but Albert Maurice stood gazing upon the fair sight as it passed away from his eyes, feeling that beauty and sweetness, such as he there beheld, had claims to rule far different from those of mere iron-handed power. He was wakened from his reverie, however, by some one pulling him by the cloak; and, turning round, he beheld the little druggist Ganay, who, with an air of as much bitter disappointment, anger, and surprise, as habitual command over his features would allow them to assume, looked up in the face of Albert Maurice, demanding, “What is to be done now?”

“Where is the Lord of Neufchâtel?” re-

joined the young citizen, without directly answering.

“ Thank God, not yet arrived ! ” replied the druggist. “ Shall I go and stay him from coming ? ”

“ No ! ” answered Albert Maurice thoughtfully. “ No, let him come ; it were better that he should, — now, fair uncle, ” he continued, speaking to Martin Fruse, who had followed him through the crowd, and still stood beside him where the multitude had left them almost alone, — “ now, fair uncle, let us to the town-hall, whither Master Ganay will accompany us. You, who are good speakers, had better propose an address of the city in answer to the proclamation just made ; and the good Lord of Neufchâtel, who will be present, will doubtless look on and answer for your loyal dispositions. For my part, I shall keep silence.”

He spoke these words aloud, but with a peculiar emphasis, which easily conveyed to the mind of the druggist his conviction that the farther prosecution of their purposes must be

delayed for the time; and as they proceeded towards the town-hall, Albert Maurice, by a few brief words, which good Martin Fruse neither clearly understood nor sought to understand, explained to the other the necessity of keeping the Lord of Neufchâtel attached to their party.

Albert Maurice then fell into silence which was deep and somewhat painful; and yet, strange to say, the news that he had heard of the Duke of Burgundy's safety, and the turn that the affairs had taken, was far from a disappointment to him — it was a relief. The very sight of the princess had made him thoughtful. To behold so fair, and seemingly so gentle a creature, and to know that, as he stood there before her, he bore within his own bosom the design, the resolve — however noble might be his motives, however great the object he proposed — of breaking the sceptre which was to descend to her; and of tearing from her hand the power she held from her mighty ancestors, produced feelings any thing but sweet. Thence, too, thought ran on; and he asked him-

self, why was her reign the one to be marked out for overthrowing the ancient rule of her fathers? and he was forced to acknowledge, that it was because she was weak and young, a woman, and an orphan — and that was no very elevating reflection. Still farther, as he passed across the whole extent of the market-place once more, when the princess had just left it, he found all the busy tongues that had been lately vociferating his name now so occupied with the fresh topic, that he walked on almost without notice; and contempt for that evanescent thing popular favour did not tend to raise his spirits to a higher pitch.

He entered the town-hall then, gloomy; and though all the great traders present united to congratulate him on his safe return to Ghent, he remained thoughtful and sad, and could only throw off the reserve which had fallen upon him, when the arrival of the Lord of Neufchâtel gave him a strong motive for exertion.

The other persons present received the noble baron, who condescended to visit their town-

hall, with a degree of embarrassment which, though not perhaps unpleasing to him, from the latent reverence that it seemed to evince, was, at least, inconvenient. But Albert Maurice, on the contrary, with calm confidence in his own powers, and the innate dignity which that confidence bestows, met the nobleman with ease equal to his own ; though without the slightest abatement of that formal respect, and all those terms of courteous ceremony, to which his station gave him a title, and which the young citizen was anxious to yield. This mixture of graceful ease with profound reverence of demeanour delighted not a little the old seneschal of Burgundy ; and when, after a time, an address was proposed and discussed in his presence, and his opinions were listened to and received with universal approbation, the sense of conscious superiority, satisfied pride, and gratified vanity ; taught the worthy old lord to regard the good citizens of Ghent with feelings of pleasure and affection, very different from those he had once entertained.

It so luckily happened, also, that on this the

first occasion of his mingling amongst the citizens, their proceedings were of such a character as could not, in the least, compromise him with his fellow nobles. The matter discussed was merely a congratulatory address to the Princess, in answer to her proclamation, setting forth nothing but loyalty and obedience, and carefully avoiding the slightest allusion to all topics of complaint and discontent. The little druggist Ganay spoke at length upon the subject; and, piquing himself rather than otherwise upon a degree of hypocritical art, he lunched forth into high and extraordinary expressions of joy on the good tidings that the Princess had been pleased to communicate, assured her of the loyalty and devotion of the good people of Ghent, and even ventured upon a high and laudatory picture of her father's character.

Albert Maurice stood by in silence; and though the druggist so far mistook his character as to imagine that the young citizen might admire the skill and dexterity with which he changed the purpose of their meeting, such

was far from the case. While he listened, and suffered the other to proceed in a task with which he did not choose to meddle himself, the feelings of Albert Maurice were those of deep contempt ; and he silently marked all the words and actions of the other, in order to read every trait of his character, and to acquire a complete insight into the workings of his dark and designing mind, which might be useful to him in the events which were still to come. Nor was the druggist alone the subject of his observation. Always a keen inquisitor of the human heart, Albert Maurice now watched more particularly than ever the conduct of the different influential citizens, as persons with whom he might hereafter have to act in circumstances of difficulty ; but it was upon Ganay that his attention was principally fixed, both from a feeling that he would have to use him as a tool, or oppose him as an enemy, if ever those events occurred which he anticipated ; and also from a belief that the other, in striving to hurry him forward, had some deep personal motive at the bottom of his heart.

During the whole course of the discussion the young citizen spoke but a few words, the tendency of which was, to add to the congratulation of the citizens, addressed to the Princess Mary, the petition that she would be the guardian and protectress of the liberties and privileges of the citizens of Ghent. While he was in the very act of speaking, there came a clanging sound of a number of steps on the grand staircase, and, the moment after, an armed head appeared above the rest; a second followed, and then a number more; and it became very evident that a considerable band of soldiers were intruding themselves into a place, sacred by immemorial usage from their presence. The citizens drew back as the troopers forced their way forward, and gradually, with many expressions of surprise and indignation, gathered round the spot where Albert Maurice had been speaking. With the young burgher himself indignation at the violation of the privileges of the city overcame every other feeling; and, starting forward before the rest of the burghers, he faced at once, with his hand upon his sword,

the inferior officer who was leading forward the men-at-arms, exclaiming, "Back, back, upon your life," in a voice that made the vaulted roof of the building echo with its stern, determined tones.

The officer did, indeed, take a step back at his command; for there was a lightning in his eye at that moment that was not to be encountered rashly. "Sir," said the Lieutenant of the Prévôt, for such he was, "I come here but to do my duty, and I must do it."

"And pray, sir, what duty," demanded Albert Maurice, "can afford you an excuse for violating the laws of your country and the privileges of the city of Ghent? Have you never heard by chance that this is our free town-hall, in which no soldier but a member of the burgher guard has a right to set his foot?"

"I come, sir," replied the man, "not so much as a soldier as an officer of justice, in order to arrest you yourself, Albert Maurice, charged with high treason, and to lodge you as a prisoner in the castle, till such time as you can be brought to trial for your offences."

Albert Maurice deliberately unsheathed his sword; a weapon which at that time the citizens of many of the great towns of Flanders and Brabant held it their peculiar right to wear. Others were instantly displayed around him; and at the same moment the little druggist sprang up to the window, and, putting out his head, shouted forth, "To arms, citizens of Ghent, to arms!" — which words the ears of those within might hear taken up instantly by those without; and the cry, well known in all the tumults of the city of "sta! sta! sta! — to arms! to arms!" was heard echoing through the square below; while Albert Maurice replied slowly and deliberately to the Lieutenant of the Prévôt.

"Sir," he said, "whatever may be your motive for coming here, and be the charge against me just or not, you have violated one of the privileges of the city, which never shall be violated with impunity in my person. I command you instantly to withdraw your men; and, perhaps, on such condition, you may receive pardon for your offence. As far as concerns myself, I appeal from your jurisdiction,

and lay my cause before the Princess, to whom I am willing immediately to follow."

"That, sir, is utterly impossible," replied the Lieutenant; "nor will I consent to withdraw my men till I have executed the commission with which I am charged."

"Then witness every one," exclaimed Albert Maurice, "that the consequences of his own deed be upon the head of this rash man."

The parties within the hall — of citizens on the one hand and soldiers on the other — were very equally matched in point of numbers, though the superior discipline and arms of the Prévôt's guard would, in all probability, have given them the advantage in the strife that seemed about to commence; but while each body paused, with that natural reluctance which men always have to strike the first blow, the multiplying shouts and cries in the square before the town-house gave sufficient notice that an immense superiority of numbers would soon be cast upon the side of the citizens. Both Albert Maurice and the Prévôt's Lieutenant caught the sounds; and the former, pointing

towards the open windows, exclaimed, "Listen, and be warned!"

"Do you, sir, really intend to resist the lawful authority of the Duke?" demanded the other, with evident symptoms of shaken resolution and wavering courage.

"Not in the least, sir," replied Albert Maurice, calmly but firmly; "nor do I desire to see blood flow, or tumult take place, though the cause be your own rash breach of the privileges of the city. I appeal my cause to the Princess herself; and you well know that from the very name you have given the charge against me — that of treason — the eschevins of the city are incompetent to deal with the case."

"Nay, but the Princess cannot hear your cause to-day," replied the Lieutenant of the Prévôt; "for she has gone forth but just now towards Alost, to publish the safety of my Lord the Duke; you must, therefore, surrender yourself a prisoner till she returns."

"Nay, nay," replied Albert Maurice, "not so: here all the chief citizens of Ghent will be

surety for my appearance. Into their hands I yield myself, but not into yours."

"I must have better bail than that," answered the Lieutenant with perturbation of mind, evidently increasing every moment as the shouts became louder without, and the noise of frequent feet in the stone vestibule below gave notice that his position was growing every instant more and more dangerous. At that moment, however, the old Lord of Neufchâtel advanced to the side of the young citizen. "Hark ye, Master Lieutenant," he said; "to end all this affray, I, Thibalt of Neufchâtel, knight and noble, do pledge myself for the appearance of this young citizen, Master Albert Maurice, to answer before the Princess the crime with which he is charged; and I become his bail in life and limb, lands and lordship, in all that I can become bound or forfeit, to my Lord the Duke: and now, sir, get you gone; for this day have you committed a gross and shameful outrage against the privileges of these good people of Ghent; and I, old Thibalt of Neufchâtel, tell you so to your beard."

“ Long live the Lord of Neufchâtel ! Long live the defender of the people of Ghent ! Long live the gallant friend of the commons ! ” shouted a hundred voices at once, as the old noble thus far committed himself in their cause, and waved his hand for the Lieutenant of the Prévôt to retire.

Much would that officer have now given, to have been able to do so, without any prospect of annoyance ; but by this time, the two large entrances at the end of the hall were completely blocked up by a dense crowd of traders and artisans, armed hastily with whatever weapons they had been able to find, from partisans to weavers' beams. Beyond the doorways, again, the antechamber was completely filled by men of the same description ; and from the number of voices shouting up and down the great staircase, it was clear that the whole town-house was thronged with the stirred up multitude. Those who had first reached the door had, with more moderation than might have been expected, paused in their advance, as soon as they saw the parley that was going

on between the citizens and the soldiers. But when the Lieutenant of the Prévôt turned round to effect his retreat, they made no movement to give him way, and stood firm, with a sort of dogged determination, which the slightest word from any one present would have changed, in a moment, into actual violence. The officer paused as soon as he saw the attitude they had assumed, and eyed them with doubt not a little mingled with fear ; the citizens round Albert Maurice stood silent as if undetermined how to act ; and the grim faces of the crowd, worked by many an angry passion, filled up the other side of the hall.

The resolution of Albert Maurice himself, however, was taken in a moment ; and, advancing from amongst his friends, he passed round before the Prévôt's band, and approached the crowd that obstructed their passage out. " My good friends," he said, " let me entreat of you to keep peace, and let these men depart quietly. Let us not risk our rights and privileges, and stain a just and noble cause, by any act of violence ; let them go forth in safety ; and we here,

your fellow-citizens, will see that no breach of our rights take place."

No one moved a step ; and for a moment or two the leaders of the crowd remained in silence, looking alternately at each other and at the young speaker, with an expression of countenance which boded but little good to the luckless band of the Prévôt. At length one gruff voice demanded, " What do they here ? "

" They came with orders from their superior officer," replied Albert Maurice, " for the purpose of arresting me."

" Then they should die for their pains," replied the same rough voice, which was supported by loud cries from behind of " Down with them, down with them ! "

" Nay, nay," exclaimed Albert Maurice, raising his tone, " it must not ; it shall not be so. Men of Ghent, for my honour, for your own ; for the safety and privileges of the town, let them pass free. If ye love me," he added, in a gentler voice.

This appeal to their feeling towards himself was not without its effect ; and, after consider-

able persuasions and delays, he prevailed upon them to withdraw from the antechamber and the staircase, and then, leading down the Lieutenant himself, he conducted him and his men-at-arms through a lane of very ominous-looking faces in the vestibule out into the great square, which was now thronged in almost every part by bodies of the armed populace. Through the midst of these, also, though not without considerable danger, Albert Maurice obtained a free passage for the Prévôt's band; nor did he leave them till he had seen them clear of all obstruction. The Lieutenant had remained completely silent during their passage through the crowd, except when called upon to give some command to his men concerning their array. When, however, they were free from the people, he took the hand of the young citizen in his, and wrung it hard: "Master Albert Maurice," he said, "you have acted a noble part, and it shall be remembered when it may do you good."

"Let it be remembered, sir," replied the young citizen, "to show that the people and

burghers of Ghent, while they are determined to maintain their rights with vigour, are equally determined not to maintain them with violence. Do but justice, sir, to our motives and our conduct, and we demand no more."

As soon as he had seen the little band of soldiers placed beyond the risk of all farther opposition, he returned to the town-hall, amidst the shouts of the people, who were now lingering to talk over the events that had already occurred, and to see whether any thing fresh might not arise to give them an opportunity of exercising the arms they held in their hands, and of satisfying the spirit that had been excited amongst them. On his arrival in the hall, he instantly approached the Lord of Neufchâtel, saying, "Of course I consider myself as a prisoner in your hands, my lord, till such time as I can be heard in my own defence by the Princess and her council, which, I beseech you, may be as soon as you can bring it about."

"You seem to understand all these things,

young gentleman," replied the old noble, "as well as if you had been born to courts. Let us now go forth, then, to my lodging, where I will entertain you as well as my poor means will admit; and will immediately send to ascertain when the Princess will condescend to hear your cause."

This mode of proceeding was, of course, immediately adopted; and Albert Maurice accompanied the Lord of Neufchâtel to his dwelling; where, partly as a prisoner, partly as a guest, he remained during the rest of the day, and the night that followed. The conduct of his entertainer towards him was a combination of stately hospitality and patronising superiority; and Albert Maurice himself, without abating one jot of that innate dignity and proud sense of mental greatness, which more or less affected his usual demeanour, succeeded, by showing all due reverence for the rank of his host, and expressing no small gratitude for the liberal feeling he had displayed towards him, in winning each hour upon the old

officer's esteem. The whole history of his case also, as it had occurred, and the written testimony which he produced to show the origin of his arrest by Maillotin du Bac, afforded a sufficient presumption of his innocence to satisfy the old Lord of Neufchâtel, who assured the young citizen of his personal protection and support before the council. Late in the evening a messenger from the palace announced, that at noon the next day the Princess Mary would hear Albert Maurice and his accusers; and shortly after the old lord left him for the night, bidding him amuse himself with a few books and papers which he pointed out in the chamber assigned to him, and recommending him not to think further of to-morrow, as his acquittal was certain. Albert Maurice, willingly following his advice, sat down to read; and the sun soon after set to the young citizen, leaving him in a position as different as it is possible to conceive, from that which he had contemplated the night before, as his probable situation at the end of four-and-twenty hours.

CHAPTER XIV.

DURING the course of the following morning Albert Maurice was visited, in the sort of honourable imprisonment to which he was subjected, by all the chief citizens of Ghent; and a number of them begged permission of the ex-seneschal of Burgundy to accompany their young townsman to the council-table of the palace. This was immediately granted to Martin Fruse and several others, who, by relationship or connection, could claim a near interest in the fate of Albert Maurice. At the same time the rumour of what was about to occur spread all over Ghent, and before the arrival of the appointed hour, a large crowd, composed of different classes, surrounded the great gate of the dwelling of the Lord of Neufchâtel. At about half past eleven, one of the young citizen's own horses was

brought from his house to the place of his temporary abode; and, shortly after, the old nobleman rode forth, accompanied by his *protégé*, and followed by half a dozen of the principal burghers; while a party of about twenty of his own armed attendants brought up the rear of the cavalcade. In this order, and amongst deafening shouts from the people, who ran on by the sides of their horses, they proceeded to the palace, where a considerable crowd was also assembled.

In the court-yard, drawn up so as to face the great gate, was a small body of men-at-arms clad in complete steel, with horses furnished with that sort of defensive armour called *bard* or *bardo*; while, in a double line from the entrance of the outer enclosure to the steps before the palace appeared a strong body of *harquebussiers* with their slow matches lighted, as if prepared for an anticipated struggle;—behind these, again, appeared the soldiers of the *Prévôt's* guard, who were chosen in general from those lighter and more active troops, which at a former period were called in the

English armies hobblers; but which had now generally obtained the name of *jennetaires*, from the jennets or light Spanish horses on which they were usually mounted.

The Lord of Neufchâtel and his companions alighted at the outer gate, and passed on foot through the formidable military array above described. The old nobleman led the way, followed by Albert Maurice, who, with a firm step and an upright carriage, but without the slightest touch of bravado in his demeanour, passed along the whole line, which, he plainly saw, was drawn up to overawe any attempt to rescue him, that the populace might be inclined to make in case of his condemnation. The same demonstrations of military force appeared in the outer hall, and in an ante-room beyond, in which the young citizen and his companions were detained for a few minutes, while his arrival was announced in the chamber of audience with which it communicated.

It were vain to say that no shade of emotion passed through the bosom of Albert Maurice as he stood there waiting for an audience

which was to determine his fate for life or death ; but still his feelings were very different from those which men of less firm nerve might be supposed to experience on such an occasion. Poor Martin Fruse, who stood behind him, quivered in every limb with anxiety and apprehension ; fidgeted here and there, and many a time and oft plucked his nephew by the sleeve, to receive rather than to yield consolation and encouragement. The countenance of the young burgher, however, was in no way troubled : there was in it that expression of deep, grave thought, which befitted the time and circumstances ; but his brow was unclouded, his cheek had lost not a tint of its natural hue, and his lip quivered not with any thing like agitation.

After a brief pause, two soldiers, who stood with their partisans crossed before the entrance of the audience hall, raised their weapons at a signal from within. The doors were thrown open, and in the midst of much hurrying and confusion — for a number of persons had by some means gained admission to the ante-chamber to witness the proceedings — Albert

Maurice, and those who accompanied him, were led forward to the end of a long table, at which were seated a body of the noblest men of the land. A wooden bar had been drawn from each side of the council-board to the wall on either hand; and two soldiers with drawn swords were placed within these barriers, to prevent the spectators from advancing beyond them. The space thus left at the end of the hall being but small was soon filled up, and the doors were immediately closed by the orders of the Lord of Imbercourt, who was sitting near the head of the table.

In the chair of state, which occupied the principal place in the hall, sat the same gentle, beautiful being whom Albert Maurice had seen the day before in the great square. She was dressed as befitted her state and station; and, in a semicircle behind her, stood a bevy of fair girls, whose beauty, however, faded completely before her own. She was somewhat paler than the day before, and perhaps a slight degree of agitation and anxiety might be visible in her looks: but still the

predominant expression of her countenance was gentle calmness; and, as she raised the dark fringes of her soft hazel eyes towards the accused, when he took his place at the end of the table, they seemed to say—“I shall be a lenient judge.”

His eyes met hers for a moment, and the colour rose slightly in her cheek as they did so; while, at the same time, a thrill of feelings, new and strange, passed through the heart of Albert Maurice. The principal places of the council-table were filled by the Lords of Ravestein, Imbercourt, Hugonet, and Vere; but the Duchess of Burgundy herself, the wife of Charles the Bold, was not present.

A momentary silence succeeded the bustle of their entrance, and the Lord of Neufchâtel surrendered in due form the prisoner for whom he had become responsible, and claimed to be delivered from the charge. The business of the council then seemed suspended for a time, from some motive which Albert Maurice did not understand. This was explained, however, the minute after, when a door, which entered within the bar, was thrown open, and Maillotin

du Bac, his countenance as pale as ashes, his arm in a sling, and his head wrapped in innumerable bandages, was supported into the hall by two attendants. The eye of the Princess fixed upon him with an expression of grief and compassion, and making an eager gesture with her hand, she exclaimed, "Place him a chair, place him a chair!"

This command was immediately obeyed; and after the Prévôt had paused for a few minutes to regain strength, he was directed to proceed with his charge against Albert Maurice, qualified simply as a citizen of Ghent. This he instantly did with a loudness of tone and a degree of vindictive vehemence, which no one could have supposed him capable of exerting, from the weak state in which he appeared to be. His present charge was somewhat differently couched from that which he had made against the young citizen at the castle of Hannut: he passed over in complete silence all the circumstances of the prisoner's arrest, merely stating, that he had received information of a treasonable communication carried on by this young citizen;

between Ghent, Namur, and France; and that he had arrested him accordingly. On his person he said he had found letters, the tendency of which placed the facts beyond doubt; and also showed that the prisoner was criminally connected with those lawless bands of *routiers* and plunderers called the Green Riders. He then went on to detail his having placed him securely in one of the strongest dungeons of the castle of Hannut, and of his having discovered the next morning that the dungeon was vacant. How it became so he said he could not tell; but certain it was that he had not been received by the Lord of Hannut with that courtesy and willing co-operation which, as an officer of the Duke of Burgundy, he had a right to expect. He next detailed to the council his pursuit of the Green Riders; and related the manner in which he had been attacked and defeated, although he rated the number of the brigands as not less than triple that of his own band. It was evidently their design, he said, and probably their whole design, to deprive him of the papers which proved the guilt of their comrade and ally, who

stood there at the end of the table. In this view they had unfortunately been too successful ; but he was ready to swear upon his knightly oath, and two or three of his band, to whom he had shown those papers, were prepared to bear witness, that they were of a most treasonable character.

To confirm this statement two of the troopers were accordingly called in, and swore to the Prévôt having shown them the papers found upon the prisoner's person, which were full of treason in every line.

During the evidence of one of these persons, the eye of Maillotin du Bac detected the old Lord of Neufchâtel in whispering something to the prisoner ; and he exclaimed loudly and indecently against that nobleman for cogging, as he called it, with a base mechanical citizen and a traitor.

“ Hark ye, Sir Maillotin du Bac,” replied the old Lord, bursting forth with no small indignation, “ you yourself are a grovelling hound ; and by the Lord that lives, the first time I meet thee I will drub out of thee the

little life that the good Green Riders have left thee, and more ——”

“Peace, peace, sirs,” interrupted the Lord of Imbercourt; “you forget the presence in which you stand, your own dignity, and the solemnity of the occasion. My Lord of Neufchâtel, do you object to tell the counsel what you whispered but now in the ear of that young man?”

“Not I, in faith,” replied the other; “that was just what I was about to tell you when you interrupted me. I was then saying that the fellow there, who has just sworn to having read so much treason, must have learned to read very fast, and somewhat late in the day; for not a year ago he was trumpeter in my train, and could not tell an A from a Z.”

“Ha!” cried the Lord of Imbercourt, “this must be looked to. Some one hand him a book, — methinks thou turnest mighty pale,” he added, speaking to the trooper as his command was obeyed; and a volume of the archives of Burgundy was placed in the man’s hand. “There, read me that sentence!”

With trembling hands the man held the

book, gazing with a white face, and lack-lustre eyes, upon the characters which it contained, and which were evidently to him meaningless enough. After a moment's vain effort to perform the impossible task, he lifted his eyes, and rolled them, full of dismay and detected guilt, round the faces of all present; while Maillotin du Bac, in rage and disappointment, set his teeth firm in his pale lip, and stamped his foot heavily upon the ground. The brow of the Chancellor Hugonet darkened; and, pointing to the man who had so evidently committed a gross and wilful perjury, he exclaimed, "Take him away, and let him be well guarded." The command was immediately obeyed, and the trooper was hurried out of the chamber by two of the attendants.

"Do you not think, my Lords," said the low, sweet voice of Mary of Burgundy, "that we may dismiss this cause? If it be supported by such witnesses as these, it will bring more disgrace upon our nation than can be well wiped off."

"We must not forget, madam," replied Im-

bercourt, "that here is justice to be done to the characters of two persons, the accused and his accuser; and though the nature of the testimony offered as yet, may well induce us to view this charge with suspicion, yet we should be doing less than justice to this young citizen of your good town of Ghent, did we not give him the opportunity of clearing his character fully from even a shade of doubt. Sir Maillotin du Bac," he added somewhat sternly, "have you any other testimony to produce in support of your accusation?"

"Methinks," replied the Prévôt boldly, "that my own word and testimony should be enough."

"Not here, sir," replied Imbercourt. "You, young gentleman," he added, addressing the young burgher, "you have heard the charge against you; do you desire to speak in your defence?"

"I pray thee, do so, young sir," said the Princess, bending slightly forward; — "we would fain believe you wholly innocent, for we cannot believe that our noble father, the Duke

Charles, can have done any thing to turn one true heart against him ; and we would fain hear that such a word as treason is unknown in the good land of Flanders, except in the mouths of base calumniators, such as the man, who, but now, has been taken hence."

Albert Maurice bent low his head, and then raising his eyes, he replied, — " Madam, for your good opinion I would plead long ; and, that I felt conscious of my innocence, and able to establish it before you, you may, in some degree, see, by the bold appeal I have made to your justice, rather than trust myself in the hands of one whose character is not famous for equal dealing. It seldom happens, Lady, that even in this evil world one man persecutes another without some motive, springing from either avarice, ambition, or revenge ; and yon Prévôt's bare word, perhaps, might weigh even against the fair character I trust I have hitherto borne, could I not prove, that, besides the general hate which he bears towards the citizens of Ghent, he has a cause of personal animosity against myself. The tale is soon

told, and the proofs of its veracity are in my hand," he added, laying his finger upon the papers, which he had collected to prove his innocence. " In the small town of Gembloux, whither I had gone, on business relating to the traffic of my house, I heard a woman's scream, and saw the wife of an honest burgher insulted and ill-treated at her own door by one of the brutal soldiers of that Prévôt's band ; — a band, Lady, which, by their insolent contempt of all the ordinary charities and feelings of civil life, have brought more hatred upon the rulers of Flanders than ever your noble father dreamt of, and than ever their services against the brigands can repay. But no more on that score," he continued, as the Lord of Imbercourt held up his hand with a warning gesture. " Suffice it, I saw a woman ill-treated by one of the soldiers of his band, and I struck the miscreant to the earth in the very deed ; and where is there a Christian man, be he knight or noble, citizen or peasant, who shall say that I did wrong ? Before I was aware, however, I was seized and overpowered by numbers, my arms

tied with cords, my horse-boy beaten and driven out of the town, my baggage plundered, and several sealed letters which I was bearing from Namur to Ghent broken open, and read for the purpose of forging accusations against me."

"You hear, Lords, you hear!" exclaimed Maillotin du Bac; "he acknowledges the fact of the letters, mark that."

"Ay, do mark it, noble Lords! mark it well," continued Albert Maurice, boldly:—"I do acknowledge it. Nay, more, I acknowledge that in those letters was the expression of some grief and indignation felt by the people of Namur, on account of infringed rights and violated privileges. But, at the same time, I do most strictly deny, that I knew one word of the contents of those letters, till they were read by yon bad man in my presence; and still more, I affirm, that even had I known every thing that they contained, or had I written them myself, there was no sentence in them which tyranny itself could wrest into such a crime as treason. Lady, and you, Lords of the Council, yon Prévôt has

called witnesses to tell you what were the contents of those letters, and of the honour and good faith of those witnesses you have had an opportunity of judging. I will now call upon a witness also, with whose character you have equal means of being acquainted. My Lord of Imbercourt, to you I appeal. Those letters were shown to you in my presence; and if you can, upon your knightly honour, declare that they contain treason, do so before the world."

"Your appeal to me, young gentleman," replied the Lord of Imbercourt, "must not be made in vain. I do most solemnly declare, on my honour and oath as a belted knight, that in the letters shown me by the Prévôt, as found upon that young citizen's person, though there were some expressions bordering upon turbulent discontent, yet there was nothing, in my poor judgment, which any sane man could construe into treason."

The eyes of Mary of Burgundy had fixed eagerly upon the counsellor as he spoke; and when he uttered the last words, a bright

smile of gentle satisfaction lighted up all her features, while a slight glow, spreading over her face, seemed to tell with what anxiety she had listened to the testimony of the Lord of Imbercourt. That smile and that glow were not unmarked by Albert Maurice; and his own cheek flushed, and his own rich voice rather trembled, as he proceeded with the next sentences of his defence.

“ On such grounds of accusation, Lady,” he continued, “ was I dragged along, tied hand and foot as a criminal of the worst description, — hurried forward in this situation with the rest of the troop, while they attacked a party of *routiers* in the forest of Hannut — carried on to the castle in that forest, and thrown into a dark dungeon, with a pile of straw for my bed. I thence made my escape ——”

“ How ?” shouted the voice of Maillotin du Bac — “ how ?”

“ How matters not,” replied Albert Maurice.

“ Ay, by my faith, but it does,” rejoined the Prévôt; “ for I accuse you, Sir Citizen, of

leaguings with these forest swine that have so long plundered and desolated the land. Every one of my men can bear witness, that for the papers concerning you alone was I attacked near Braine-la-Leud; that they were the first things sought for when we were overpowered by numbers, and that the continual cry of their leaders was, — ‘Secure the papers.’”

Albert Maurice paused, and the Chancellor Hugonet exclaimed, — “You had better explain your escape, young gentleman; this gives a new aspect to the case.”

“On the facts that followed I can say something also,” observed the Lord of Imbercourt, “having been in the castle of my good brother of Hannut when the absence of the prisoner was first discovered.”

“Speak, then, my Lord, speak,” said Mary of Burgundy eagerly; “such testimony as yours is beyond all question; and, unaccustomed to such scenes as this, I would fain see this case terminated speedily and well. Speak, then, my Lord, and tell us all you know.”

“It were better,” replied Imbercourt, “and more in the forms of justice, to suffer the accused

to tell his own tale, in regard to his escape; before I give any evidence that I can upon the subject. If you require it, sir," he added, addressing the young citizen, "I will absent myself from the council-table while you deliver your statement, that my testimony may be considered the more impartial."

"Not in the least, my Lord," replied Albert Maurice, "do I desire your absence at all; nor is it my purpose to make any statement in regard to my escape. — Escape I did — Of course I could not have done so effectually without some aid, from without or from within; and I do not choose to injure any one, however lowly or however high, by implicating them in an affair like this. Whatever you know upon the subject must be from some other source, and, knowing my own innocence in every respect, I hear you without apprehension."

"I have then but little beyond conjecture to advance," said Imbercourt. "On the morning after our arrival at the castle of Hannut, this Prévôt presented himself in great wrath before my noble brother-in-law and myself, informing us

of the escape of the prisoner, and insinuated, in somewhat insolent terms, that the Lord of Hannut — as loyal a nobleman as ever lived — had abetted the evasion. An instant investigation was instituted, and we learned that the dungeon in which the prisoner was left the night before had been found locked in the morning. No sign of violence was to be seen when we examined it in person, not a bar was broken, not a stanchion was moved: there, lay the straw which had been the prisoner's bed; there, stood the flagon and the bread which had been given him for his supper on the previous night. But, on enquiry, we found, that this Prévôt, after some deep drinking, and, in a state, as several persons witnessed, of stupid drunkenness, had visited the prisoner's cell at a late hour the preceding night; and we concluded, that he had suffered the young burgher to slip past him unobserved before he closed the door. Whether it was so or not, none but himself can tell."

"My Lord, as I before said, I will be silent on that point," replied Albert Maurice; "but

the use which I made of my liberty would be quite sufficient, I should conceive, to prove that I had no very evil or dangerous designs. I hastened immediately to Gembloux, where I obtained these papers, which I now lay before the council, to establish fully the fact that I was arrested, in the first instance, solely for striking a soldier, who had insulted the wife of a burgher of the place ; I then made all speed to Ghent, where I was sure of encountering my adversary, but where I trusted also to obtain justice."

" And the first thing you did when you were in Ghent," exclaimed Maillotin du Bac, with the angry vehemence of disappointed hatred, " was to stir up the people to tumult, to make seditious speeches in the town hall, to resist the lawful force sent to arrest you, and to incite the people to murder the officers that were despatched for your apprehension — Pretty proofs of innocence, indeed ! Well, well, the Princess and the lords of the council will see what will come of it, if they suffer such doings to take place with impunity. Who will serve the state, if the state will not support them in

doing their duty ? The strong hand, lords, the strong hand is the only way to keep down these turbulent, disaffected burghers."

"It must be the strong hand of justice, then, Prévôt," replied Imbercourt ; "and let me tell you, that you yourself, by the unjust arrest of this young man, have done more to stir up the people to rebellion than the most seditious traitor that ever harangued from a market cross. Nor, sir, must you scatter such false and malicious accusations without proofs. Before I sat down here, I, with several of the other lords now present, investigated accurately what had been the conduct of this young burgher during the course of yesterday morning ; and I find that, so far from his behaviour being turbulent and seditious, he acted only as a loyal subject to our lord the Duke, and was one of those good merchants who drew up an address of congratulation on the news of our sovereign's safety. More, I found that, had it not been for his influence and strong exertions with the people, your lieutenant and his band, Sir Prévôt, would have been sacrificed to

their indignation, for imprudently intruding into a privileged place, while the merchants of the good town were assembled in deliberation. Nor can any one doubt the fact, for your own lieutenant was the first to bear witness to this young citizen's generous intercession in his favour."

Maillotin du Bac set his teeth hard, and stretched out his hand upon his knee, with a sort of suppressed groan, which might proceed either from the pain of his bruises, or the disappointment of his malice. After a short pause, during which no one seemed prepared to say any thing more, either in accusation or defence, the Princess herself spoke, with that sort of timid and doubtful tone which was natural in one so young, so inexperienced, and so gentle on giving a decision upon so important a cause, although it was sufficiently evident to all what her decision must be.

"I think, my lords," she said, "after what we have heard there cannot be any great difference of opinion. The evidence which has been brought forward seems not only to ex-

culpate this young gentleman from all charge whatever, but to cast the highest honour upon his character and conduct. What say you, my lords? do you not acquit him freely from all stain?"

The voices of the council were found unanimous in favour of the accused; and it was announced to him that he stood free and clear from all accusation. The Princess bowed to him, as his full acquittal was declared, with a smile of gratification at the result, which sprang from a pure, a noble, and a gentle heart, pleased to see a fellow creature, whose dignified deportment and graceful carriage could not but win upon the weaknesses of human nature, establish clearly a higher and more dignified title to esteem by tried virtue and integrity. There was no other feeling mingled with her smile; nor did Albert Maurice, for a moment, dream that there was; but, at the same time, it wakened a train of thoughts in his own mind both dangerous and painful. More than ever did he feel that he was born out of the station for which nature had formed his spirit; and

more than ever did his heart burn to do away those grades in society, which, though the inevitable consequences of the innate differences between different men, he, from mortified pride, termed, artificial distinctions, and unjust barriers betwixt man and man. It were to enquire too curiously, perhaps, to investigate how the one sweet smile of that beautiful lip woke in the heart of the young citizen a train of such apparently abstruse thoughts. So, however, it was ; and, as the doors of the audience hall were thrown open behind him, allowing those to go forth who had gained admittance to hear his examination before the council, he bowed to the Princess and the nobles present, with feelings individually more friendly to all of them, but certainly more hostile to the general system of government, and the existing institutions of society.

Still Albert Maurice entertained no presumptuous dreams in regard to Mary of Burgundy. He thought her certainly the most beautiful creature he had ever beheld. She had smiled upon him sweetly and gently. She

had been present at his examination herself, though she might, notwithstanding his appeal, have left it to the decision of her council. She had done him full and impartial justice; and she had seemed to derive a personal pleasure from his acquittal. All this he felt strongly; and he was fond to picture from that fair face, and those soft hazel eyes, a mind and a spirit within all gentleness and excellence. He thought, too, that had mankind been in its just and natural situation, where no cold rules placed as wide a distance between different classes, as if they were composed of different creatures, he might have striven to win, — ay, and he thought he might have won, that fair hand, which had held the scales of justice for him so impartially.

Such feelings, and all the many collateral thoughts to which those feelings gave rise, were busy in his breast, as he followed the good old Lord of Neufchâtel towards the door. Just as he was going out, he turned to take one more glance of the Princess, — the last, perhaps, he was ever to obtain; but Mary of Burgundy, and her ladies, had already quitted the hall, as

well as his accuser, Maillotin du Bac, who had hastened away to conceal himself from popular indignation. Nothing was to be seen but one or two of the members of the council, standing together in a group at the farther end of the table, and apparently, by the gay laughter in which they were indulging, conversing over some indifferent subject. Albert Maurice turned, and strode through the antechamber, while the Lord of Neufchâtel walked on before him, demonstrating, with proud courtesy, various points of feudal law to good Martin Fruse, who listened to his speech with every mark of the most deferential respect. The young citizen was just entering the outer hall, and he already heard the shouts of the people in the square, welcoming, with a glad voice, the news of his acquittal, which had preceded his own appearance, when somebody plucked him by the sleeve, and one of the officers of the household informed him, in a low tone, that the Princess Mary required his presence for a moment in private.

The heart of the young burgher beat quick ;

but without pause he followed the attendant, as he turned away from him, and in a moment had passed through one of the side doors into the private apartments of the palace.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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